The Beaver

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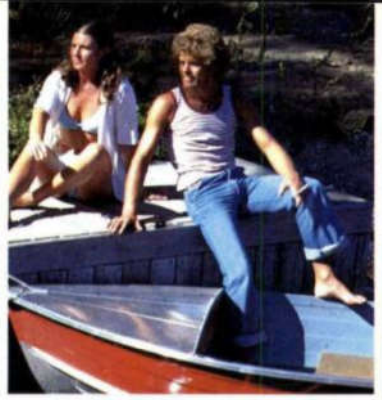
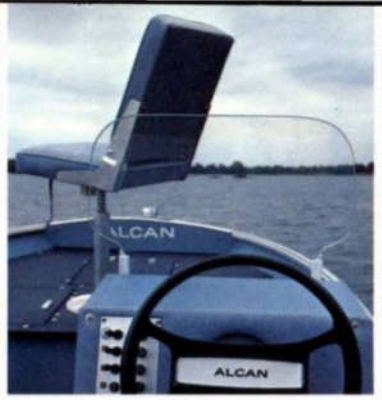
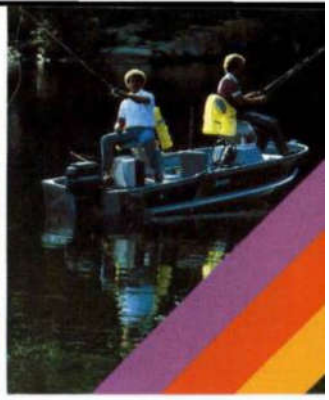
The Last Coureurs De Bois

Placer Mining for Yukon Gold

Exotic Northern Flowers







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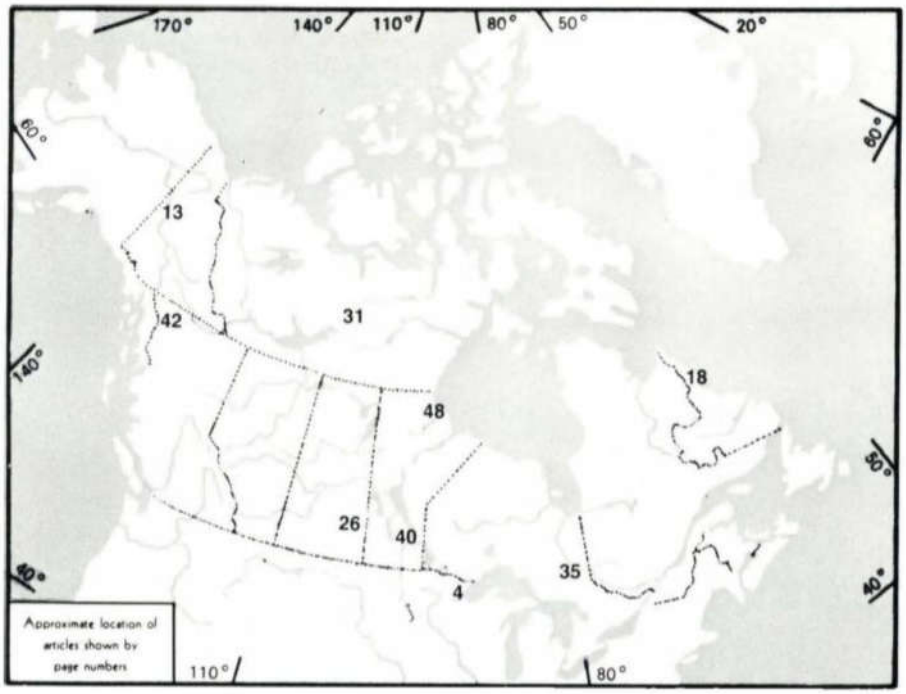

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COVER: Lapland Rosebay (*Rhododendron lapponicum* Wahlenb), a Rhododendron which grows in the extreme northern part of Manitoba. For approximately ten days, from mid-June to the beginning of July, tundra and ridge are flushed pink with the flowers of this dwarf shrub which grows about four inches high. A water-colour painted in the Churchill area by Linda Fairfield.

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Two hundred years ago this spring, the canoes that left Lachine for the Northwest carried to the wintering traders the news of the formation of the North West Company. The names and some of the exploits of the North Westers are well known; less attention has been paid to their Montreal-based rivals whose competition encouraged much of the expansion which the North West Company underwent during the first twenty years.

This article concentrates on one of the most obscure opposition groups — that organized by a number of French-speaking traders, some of them the sons of prominent fur-trading families of New France. Their venture and its ultimate failure marked the end of an era in Canadian fur trade.

A voyageur of the 1860s. Water-colour by Frances Hopkins.

The Last Coureurs de Bois

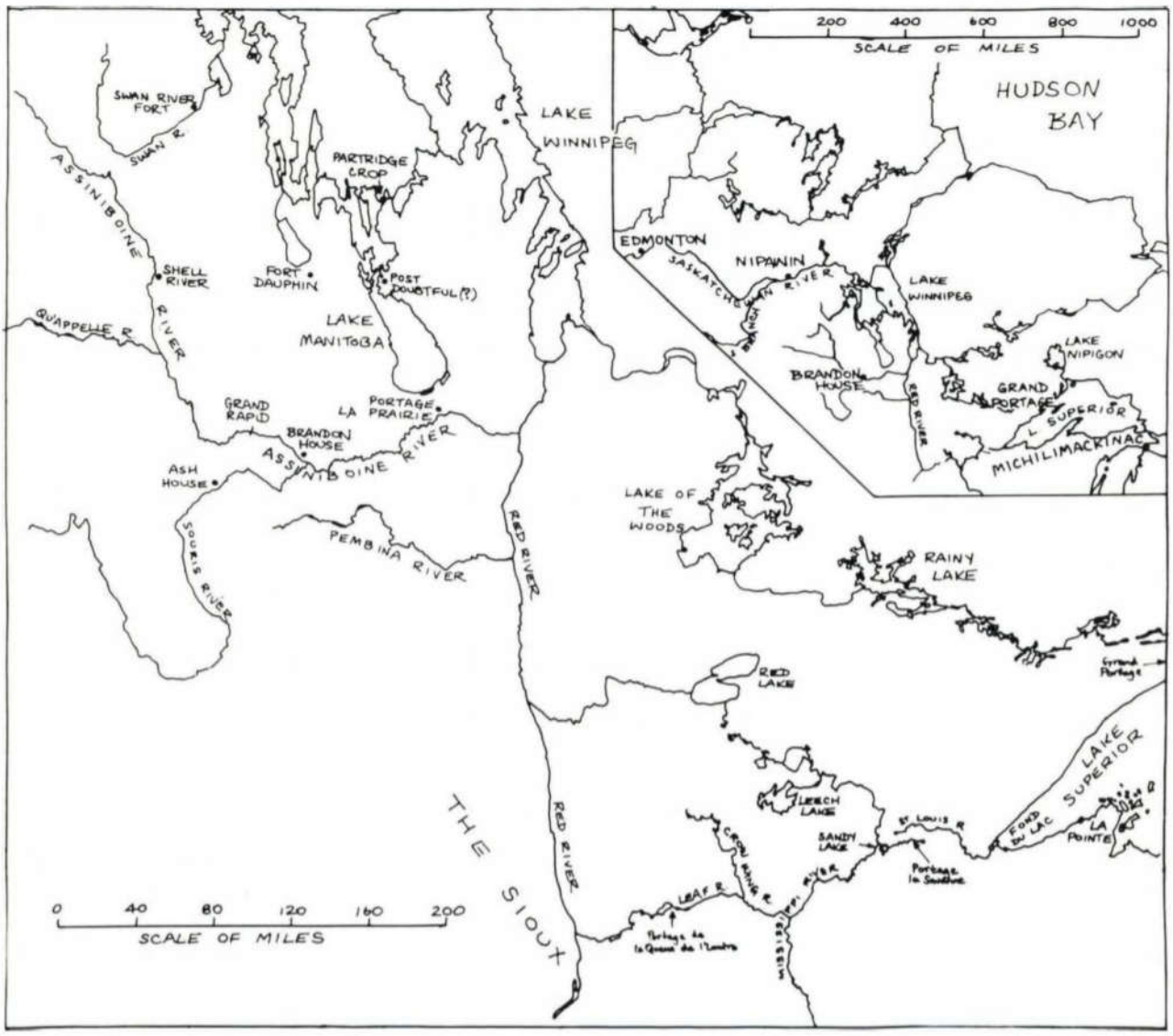
By Harry W. Duckworth

Dr Duckworth, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Manitoba, devotes many hours to his second career as a history enthusiast.

ON 19 MAY 1794, A BRIGADE OF North West Company canoes was dropping down the spring-swollen Assiniboine River under the command of Cuthbert Grant, bound for Grand Portage with the fur trading returns of the Red River district. Somewhere near the present village of St François Xavier they encountered two canoes of trade goods ascending, with a Monsieur Fournier in charge. Guileless and inclined to boast, Fournier explained that the goods were the property of two Lake Superior traders, Beaubien and Laviolette. The expedition had come from Michilimackinac the previous fall, wintered in the Sioux territory, and had been obliged for fear of the Sioux to withdraw down the Red River to the vicinity of the River Pembina. They intended to return to Lake Superior not by the same dangerous route, but by way of Grand Portage.

On 5 June, John Sutherland, the Hudson's Bay Company summer trader at Brandon House, near the forks of the Souris River and the Assiniboine, 'was visited by one of the South traders, whom I find is coming to settle some way here about.' Two more canoes of South Men passed Brandon House on 22 June, and another trader with three canoes on 2 July. News came the following day that 'the Indians...has Plundered the South Trader that came here ye 22nd of Last Month of all his rum, Tobacco, Powder, Shot and two Bales of Dry goods, and would have taken his Life if he presumed to stope them, he has Settled about 15 miles above this Place.' Later references show that one of these summer arrivals was called Jean-Baptiste Cadotte.

The little that is to be discovered about the South Men's enterprise on the Assiniboine River in 1794-95, and its subsequent development, must now be pieced together from a variety of fragmentary sources, none of them easy to understand by itself. Enough has survived, however, to show that in their mode of trading,

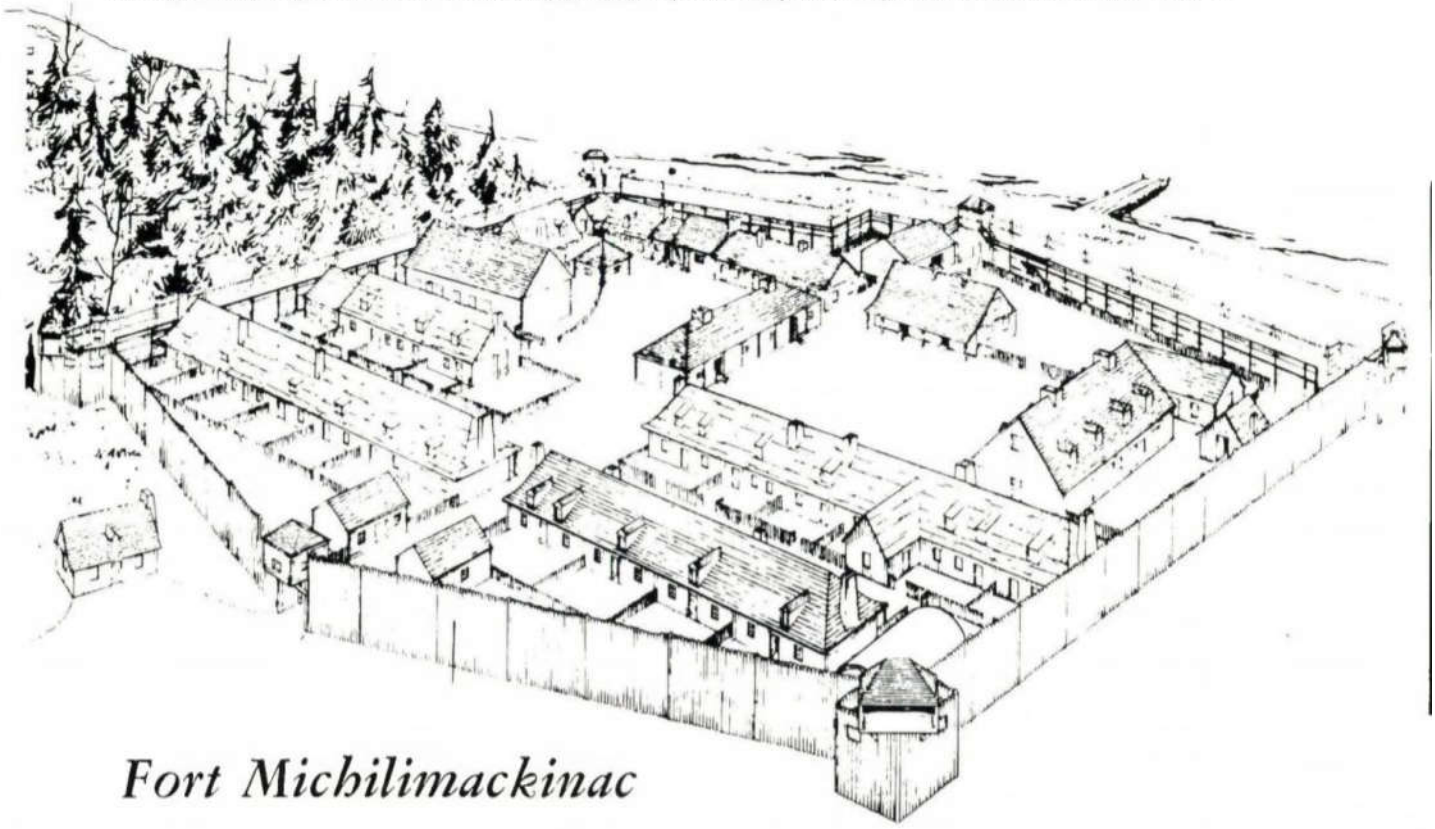


as well as in their origins and commercial connections, the South Men may reasonably be described as the last representatives of the fur-trading society of New France, before the conquest of Canada by British arms in 1760 — the last *coureurs de bois*.

Although the main route by which Montreal-and Michilimackinac-based fur traders entered the Northwest was over Grand Portage, there were two other routes out of Lake Superior. One was by way of Fond du Lac, up the St Louis River which falls into Lake Superior at Duluth, over the Portage la Savanne into the upper Mississippi system, and thence by further portages into the Red River valley. The other, by Lake Nipigon and streams falling into it, and thence by the English River system into the Winnipeg River, was considered too difficult as a through route, although a significant trade was carried on into the Nipigon country itself.

The trade into the Fond du Lac region was a natural extension of that along the south shore of Lake Superior, and in the 1780s and early 1790s it was prosecuted entirely by independent traders who got their goods on credit in July and August at Michilimackinac, and returned to sell their furs and pay their debts the following spring. The sphere of operations of these men was limited by the distance they could travel from Michilimackinac, since they had no storage depot for goods to the west of that centre. Jean-Baptiste Perrault, one of this group, has left a circumstantial account of their operations in this early period. From Perrault's *Narrative*, it is clear that a number of traders were working on the upper Mississippi in these years, outfitted by such men as Andrew Todd and Alexander Henry. To avoid a ruinous competition in their limited field, these traders, upon arrival in the country, would form a company at the beginning of the season, pooling their goods at the invoice price and dividing up goods and territory among the participants. The

Fort Michilimackinac was a fortified trading town, the centre of a complex fur-trade industry. Besides soldiers, approximately 35 families of traders lived within its walls. Founded in 1715 by the French, it was turned over to the British in 1761 and then to the United States in 1796. Drawing by Victor Hogg is based on the Lotbinère map of 1749, and published by permission of Mackinac Island State Park Commission.



Fort Michilimackinac

following spring, the traders would meet at Sandy Lake, dividing up the furs according to the contributions of goods, and dissolving the company. In 1789-90, the traders were John Sayer, Jean-Baptiste Cadotte, one Cazelai or Cazelet, Joseph Réaume, Laviolette, and Perrault in partnership with Alexis Réaume, a cousin of Joseph. The following year, the same men formed another company, except that Alexis Réaume had gone elsewhere, and Perrault was on his own.

Although these temporary companies avoided the competition which was the worst consequence of a heavy concentration of traders, the Fond du Lac district was not really large enough for all these interests. In the summer of 1791, equipped again by Andrew Todd at Michilimackinac, Perrault discovered that John Sayer, one of the group, had established himself as an outfitter at Sault Ste Marie, and had two winterers of his own in the Fond du Lac district; that another Sault outfitter, Nolin, had sent a winterer to Sandy Lake; and that Jean-Baptiste Cadotte and Joseph Réaume, equipped by Alexander Henry, had also entered the country 'to take the Savages from the Lac de la sensue to the prairies'. That is, finding the competition too keen on the upper Mississippi, or the country too rapidly running out of fur-bearing animals, Cadotte and Réaume were proposing to take the Leech Lake band of Ojibways into the valley of the Red River, the fringes of the Sioux territory, to work beaver there.

Of the Fond du Lac traders mentioned by Perrault, Joseph Réaume and Gabriel Atina Laviolette had been trading in the Lake Superior district for several years. The most interesting of the traders, however, was Jean-Baptiste Cadotte. He and his brother Michel, another trader, were the sons of an elder Jean-Baptiste Cadotte, who lived at Sault Ste Marie before the conquest of Canada, and was an early associate of Alexander Henry. The younger Jean-Baptiste was born in 1761, and is said to have received a college education at Montreal. David Thompson, who visited him at Red Lake in 1797, said that Cadotte was fluent in Ojibway, Latin, English and French. According to his grand-nephew, William Whipple Warren, Cadotte used money obtained from his father to trade at La Pointe on Lake Superior, but through spendthrift habits, and generosity to 'his Indian relatives', he ran through his capital. Alexander Henry outfitted him for a further expedition, into the valley of the upper Mississippi. Together with 'the trader Reyaulm' and others, including his brother Michel, Cadotte proceeded to the Leaf River, by way of the Mississippi

Public Archives of Canada

'North West canoe on Lake Ontario.' A water-colour by Mary Chaplin, c. 1840.

A view of the interior of reconstructed Fort Michilimackinac with the row-house on the left, Ste Anne's Church to its right and the soldiers' barracks to the far right. Courtesy of Mackinac Island State Park Commission.

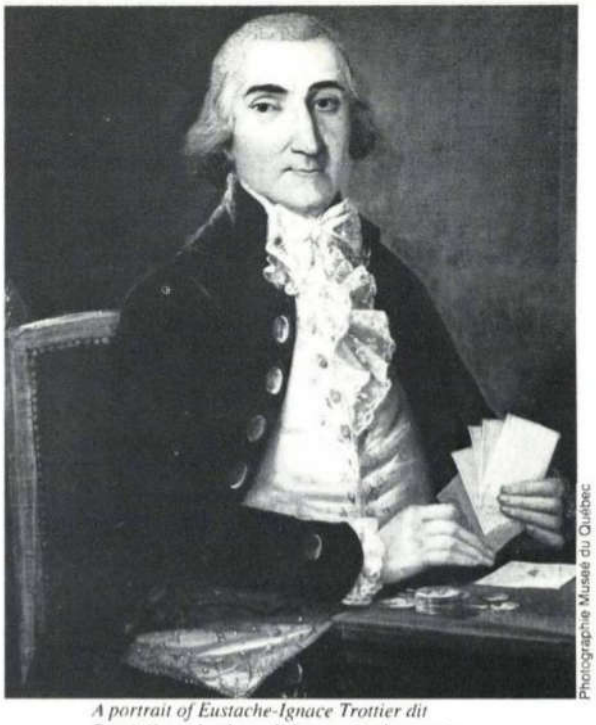
and the Crow Wing, where he spent a harrowing but successful winter trading with the Sioux. This was probably the season of 1791-92.

Cadotte and Réaume may have spent the next season at least in the upper Red River valley, in constant danger from the Sioux but probably without competition from other traders. The following year their prospects for a continued independent trade were dealt what proved to be a fatal blow. In the early summer of 1793, John Sayer, the former Fond du Lac trader, but now acting for the North West Company, hired his old fellow trader J.-B. Perrault to build a fort for that company at the head of Lake Superior, 'which would be a depot for the fond du Lac region'. Perrault did not get to Grand Portage to receive final instructions from the company's Montreal agent, John Gregory, until 10 August, after the wintering partners had left for the interior, and it is likely that the partners did not learn of the opening up of the new trading district until the next year. Certainly there were protests against the apparent extravagance of the step at the partners' meeting of 1794. Particular objections were raised by the four new business partners — Forsyth, Richardson & Co.; Todd, McGill & Co.; Grant, Campion & Co.; and Alexander Henry — who had agreed to accept small shares in the North West Company in 1792. In a letter to the wintering partners at Grand Portage, these firms wrote of the new Fond du

Lac post that 'we do not imagine that by that establishment, it will deter others from attempting to get into the Red River by that communication, or that the part of the Trade which may fall into the hands of the Company's Agent at the Fond du Lac, will for many years, if ever, pay the Outfit'. By the terms of their membership in the company (not to take effect until 1795) these firms were bound not to compete with it on its chosen ground, and they saw clearly that the creation of the new department would cut off one of the few areas in the Northwest trade still open to their independent operations. They were also aware of the possibility of entering Red River by way of Fond du Lac.

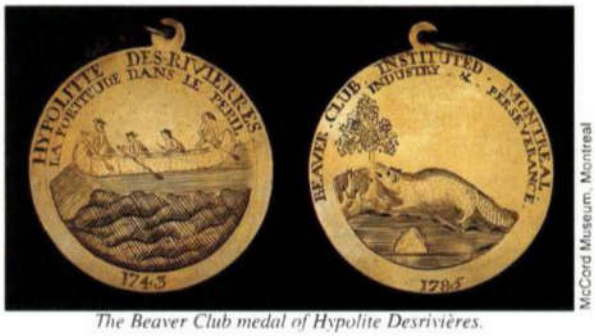
It is impossible to be sure whether Jean-Baptiste Cadotte and his associates on the upper Red River formed this plan independently, or whether it was suggested to them by the Michilimackinac traders who supplied them. The vanguard of their daring expedition was the pair of canoes under Fournier which Cuthbert Grant encountered on his way out to Grand Portage in the spring of 1794; but already in the fall of 1793 Donald McKay, the Hudson's Bay Company trader who was ascending the Assiniboine to establish Brandon House, had met two Canadians with six horses who were in daily expectation of Michilimackinac traders. He reported that 'they said that they come to bring up the Goods of the traders of Michellimackinac who was coming up with thirty Canoes up this River, they say that they Expect to meet them very soon'.

While Cadotte and Fournier, and others unnamed, were establishing themselves on the Assiniboine in the summer of 1794, well in advance of the return of the



Photographie Musée du Québec

A portrait of Eustache-Ignace Trottier dit Desrivières, by the well-known Quebec artist François Beaucourt. Painted in Montreal, 1793.



McCord Museum, Montreal

The Beaver Club medal of Hypolite Desrivières.

'Canoe of Indians'. Oil on canvas by Eastman Johnson, c. 1857. The artist's paintings are among the earliest visual records of the Grand Portage region.

St Louis County Historical Society

St Louis County Historical Society, Duluth, Minnesota

'Camp Scene at Grand Portage'. Oil on canvas by Eastman Johnson, c. 1857.

North West Company's brigades, others were at Michilimackinac getting a fresh supply of goods. Writing from there on 21 June, John Gregory, the North West Company's agent, then on his way up to Grand Portage, reported that 'Campion was fitting out LaViolette & others for the Red River & says that he would rather renounce their Share in the N.West than be restricted in his Trade'. Étienne Campion, an old Michilimackinac outfitter, with his partner William Grant had been given one of the new shares in the North West Company in 1792, and was translating his displeasure at the Fond du Lac establishment into the most direct action possible for a trader — open competition on the company's home ground.

The expedition of Laviolette inward with the goods is evidently that described in itinerary form, in an odd set of notes written by one John Hay. According to Hay, he, with Laviolette and probably Réaume (who is cited as the source of various facts relating to the route), left Michilimackinac on 27 June 1794, proceeded by Fond du Lac, the Mississippi, Crow Wing, and Leaf Rivers to the Red River, and then descended the Red and ascended the Assiniboine to the mouth of the Souris River, which was reached about 14 October. On 15 October, Robert Goodwin, then in charge for the Hudson's Bay Company at Brandon House, received a visit from 'Mr. Hay he informs me several Canoes is come up from ye Southward to Winter in this River a Mr Rhehoam Levelett &c &c.' The following day '3 Canadian Canoes passed us on their way for Capel River A Mr Auzee & Beaubien', that is, for the Qu'Appelle River, further up the Assiniboine.

Auzee is unidentified, and Goodwin may have heard the name incorrectly. Beaubien was François Beaubien Desrivières, a member of the Trotier fur-trading family of Montreal. Five brothers named Trotier-Desrivières had entered the fur trade of Lake Superior and southern Manitoba before the conquest of Canada — the eldest, Pierre-Julien, was part of a venture which leased Fort Maurepas and Fort la Reine from La Vérendrye in 1747 — and their sister was married to the last French commandant of the Western Posts, Dejordy de Villebon. The two eldest brothers, Pierre-Julien (1719-1777) and Jean-Noël (1721-1765), apparently retired after 1759, but the other three, Eustache-Ignace (1727-1799), Joseph-Amable (1733-1771) and Jacques-Hypolite (1734-1791), all remained active. In the late 1780s Hypolite Desrivières still had interests in the trade out of Lake Michigan, while Eustache was aggressively involved on the upper Ottawa. (A portrait of Eustache by Beaucourt, the well-known Quebec painter, survives.) Amable had died in 1771, and a possible business link between the family and James McGill, the mighty Scottish trader of Montreal, is suggested by various indications of friendship between McGill and the brothers, and by the fact that McGill married Amable's widow. Eustache Desrivières used the surname Beaubien, and François Beaubien, our subject, may be identified with his third child, François, born in 1764. The young François would have been well aware of his family's former association with the fur trade of the *Grand Nord*, and may have been eager to renew it. It is possible that James McGill, whose Michilimackinac firm of Todd, McGill & Co. stood to lose

St Louis County Historical Society

'Ojibwe Women'. Oil on canvas by Eastman Johnson, c. 1857.
The artist's paintings are among the few existing illustrations of the Ojibwa way of life of that period.

from the North West Company's new monopoly in Fond du Lac, was a covert supplier of Beaubien's goods.

Beaubien spent the winter of 1794-95 at a place called the Grand Rapid, about fifteen miles above Brandon House by land, along with Cadotte. Laviolette was located somewhere further up the Assiniboine. John Hay, described as Réaume's clerk, was opposed to Brandon House and the forts of the North West Company and Peter Grant, a disgruntled former North West clerk, at Souris Mouth. At Portage la Prairie were Réaume himself and Dejadon, a clerk of Laviolette's, opposed by William McKay for the North West and John Linklater for the Hudson's Bay. The whole arrangement for the dispersion of the South traders is very reminiscent of the little companies which some of the same traders had formed in the Fond du Lac country a few years before, by which, as J.-B. Perrault explained, 'in order To avoid cheating, we wintered, Two of us in each department'.

On 28 November, William McKay of the North West Company wrote Robert Goodwin at Brandon House, as follows:

> I have one thing to inform you of, and that is that Messrs Cadotte are gone across the Neck of Land between them and ye West River where all ye Inds from this place are gone hunting, and where they will get all the best Trade in the red River if they are not oposed — hoping that you will go halves with our people and send there and outsell them and get the most of ye Trade and by those means we would soon make them tired of ye red River...Mr Cadott has made since I passed there 6 Packs in which he got 60 Otters and the Remainder Beaver, Mr Grants wish is to put as much as possible of the Packs your way rather than any of those people should get any of them.

Goodwin politely declined this extraordinary proposal, having too few men to spare, as he said, and a few weeks later McKay wrote again, stating that no goods had come from above, so that it was immaterial whether he and Goodwin sent goods or not. It is likely that the North West Company did establish a fort to oppose Cadotte this winter, however. From the Grand

Rapid on the Assiniboine, where Cadotte was established, it is only fifteen miles overland to the Souris (the 'West River' of McKay's letter), near the present Hartney, Manitoba, and in this area David Thompson located what he called Ash House, which had been occupied for two winters but was abandoned by 1797-98.

It is impossible to be sure how well the South Men did with their trade during the winter. John Sutherland, for the Hudson's Bay Company at the mouth of the Shell River, reported to Goodwin at one point that 'I hear one of your Neighbours Jean batist Cadott to name has got 23 bundles of real furrs but I do not beleive it'. Later he wrote 'I hear Mr. Furney expended 10 kegs of rum and had not got two packs of furrs & very little provisions his employers sent a Common man to supercede him; am certain that some of the petty adventurers at the Red River this year is running away fast to their ruin and destruction.' Cuthbert Grant's own efforts, as chief of the district for the North West Company, were severely limited by an illness which confined him to his bed for almost two months during the winter, and in a letter to the partners on the Saskatchewan he reported that 'His Department is entirely ruined by different interests: — his opponents this year are very numerous having no less than 14 Forts to oppose, which with 7 belonging to the Company amounts in all to 21 forts in R.R. Peter Grant with 4 Canoes, and the H.B. Company with 5 Boats have entered there last Fall, as also an adventure of 17 Canoes by Michilimackinac, some of which it is suspected are destined for Fort des Prairies next summer there being so little appearance of making returns, that a considerable quantity of goods will remain for that purpose.'

The South Men left the Assiniboine as early as possible the following spring. John Hay, at Souris mouth, set off on 22 April, and Cadotte and Beaubien passed Brandon House the next day, although they left a trader, perhaps Laviolette, behind. Hay reported that they returned to Lake Superior by way of Grand Portage, avoiding the dangerous route through Sioux country, which may never have been used again to penetrate the Northwest. Some of the traders may have stayed inland, seeking new markets for the remaining goods, but Jean-Baptiste Cadotte himself certainly returned to Lake Superior. The North West Company evidently regarded him as the key to the South Men's adventure, and he was approached by John Gregory at Sault Ste Marie in August, with an offer to hire him as a clerk for the Company, on a standard three-year contract. Details were worked out by William McGillivray, another Company agent, on 2 September. By them, Cadotte agreed to the service in return for the high salary of 1200 livres per annum, equal to £100. One of the witnesses to the contract, then on his way out of the country on sick leave, was Cuthbert Grant.

There is no evidence that a further supply of goods was obtained by the South Men in the summer of 1795, but as much remained unsold, they were able to carry their trade into new regions the following season. At about the same time that Fournier was bringing the first canoes into the Assiniboine in May 1794, one Pichet had appeared at Nipawin on the Saskatchewan, intending to proceed up the south branch of that river, but hearing of recent depredations by the Indians along that branch, he had remained where he was. There is no evidence as to the success of his trade during the ensuing winter, but in the fall of 1795 Beaubien brought three canoes to the Saskatchewan, and got 9 packs of furs at Nipawin and 3 at Edmonton, facing opposition from the two large companies and also from Peter Grant's men at both places. Laviolette's clerk Dejadon was in the Swan River district in 1795-96, where he got 9 packs of furs with 2 canoe loads of goods, opposed by both Hudson's Bay and North West Company traders.

Réaume and Laviolette spent that winter somewhere near the narrows of Lake Manitoba, not far from an establishment of the Nipigon trader, Duncan Cameron, at Partridge Crop. On 16 December 1795, Cameron wrote to the Hudson's Bay trader on Lake Winnipeg, John Best, as follows: 'Messrs Reieume and La Violette that is about 30 miles from this send people continuelly with goods and Liquor to the Indians tents where they trade their 3 pound Blankets for 3 Beaver and one fathom of Cloth for 3 Beaver and their Silver works for much less than they coast at Montreall those Gentlemen begging their pardon are too ignorant to know what their goods cost them therefore they squander them away like dust.'

During the fall of 1795 Simon McTavish, the guiding force of the North West Company, set in motion a policy by which all of the independent trading interests in the Northwest would be bought out or otherwise combined into the large company. The acquisitions of the trading enterprises into Temiskaming, Michipicoten, and the Nipigon country were quickly arranged, but the oppositions of Peter Grant, and of Beaubien and Laviolette, could not be dealt with until those traders had come out of the country to Grand Portage. The final agreements were made there in July 1796. Following the meeting, Alexander Mackenzie wrote to his cousin Roderick: 'We have settled with Laviolet and Beaubien. They will fall in our debt 40,000 [livres], though we gave them 30,000 [livres] for the property in the country. Laviolett was hired for two years to winter in River Pabinna, but he and his partner quarrelled and he goes down.' Since the partners' goods had not been obtained originally from the North West Company, it appears that the company had bought their debts, perhaps after the

death of Laviolette's supplier, Etienne Campion, late in 1795.

Joseph Réaume did accept a post with the company, and was assigned to the Fort Dauphin district, near where he had wintered as an independent the season before. His actual station was probably at the narrows of Lake Manitoba, where he was the following year, opposing John Cobb, the Hudson's Bay trader who had just established what he called Post Doubtful. 'I find the Indians of this place is much attached to my neighbour,' Cobb wrote, 'who has been a Trader many years among them, so that I have little hope, of much Trade this year.' Post Doubtful was not operated again after this season. Réaume remained in the Fort Dauphin district until 1799; he was then transferred to Fond du Lac, where the North West's wintering partner was his old associate, John Sayer. He does not appear in the Arrangement of Departments for 1806, and it is likely that he was retired in that year, in view of his age and the large number of extra men available to the North West Company after its coalition with the XY Company late in 1804.

Laviolette accepted a clerkship with the North West Company in 1797, as his only means to discharge his debt to the company, and he spent the next four seasons in the Lake Winnipeg district. There still exists a copy of a courtly letter addressed to him by William McGillivray, the company's agent, in the summer of 1800, in which Laviolette was assured that the remainder of the debt would be discharged during the coming season. Laviolette died at Fond du Lac during the winter of 1803-04; it is not clear whether he was still employed by the North West Company at that time, or had retired to Lake Superior.

Jean-Baptiste Cadotte spent several seasons in different locations within the boundaries of present Minnesota. According to his great-nephew, W. W. Warren, Cadotte was an effective trader, and used his skill in dealing with the Ojibways to maintain goodwill with them during various minor crises. In 1798-99, J.-B. Perrault, still an employee of the North West Company, spent the winter in charge of Cadotte's post, having been sent to do so by John Sayer because Cadotte 'Was subject to allowing himself to be overcome by drink'. Cadotte was actually admitted a partner in the North West Company at the Grand Portage meeting of 1801, doubtless fulfilling some earlier agreement. In 1803, however, he was expelled from the partnership for drunkenness. He found various employment with the Canadian government as a storekeeper and interpreter, and is said to have died in 1818.

François Beaubien Desrivères, perhaps the only one of the South Men who had enough financial resources to avoid eventual alliance with the North West Company, continued in opposition, and was a signatory of the original XY Company agreement of October 1798, although the preamble to the subsequent agreement of 1802 states that Beaubien had since died. His family seems to have taken no more part in the western fur trade.

The tangible achievement of the South Men was not great. From a commercial point of view, they were a failure, a fate inevitable for anyone facing the juggernaut of the North West Company during its years of expansion and consolidation in the 1790s. Like Peter Grant's Little Company, they applied enough irritation to cause the North West Company to come to terms, although free spirits like Cadotte, Laviolette and Réaume can hardly have celebrated when their reward was simple employment with the company. Only Cadotte got a partnership, and this he quickly drank away. The role of the South Men in the political history of the fur trade was simply to add another small item to the list of factors that caused the consolidation of the Lake Superior trade into the hands of the North West Company.

Yet memory of their exploits remained to raise the spirits and fuel the pride of the community of traders' descendants sprinkled along the Lake Superior shores. When W. W. Warren talked to his great-aunt, or to the other old-timers he interviewed for his *History of the Ojibway Nation* in the early 1850s, this spirit and pride had forgotten long ago the commercial realities, and remembered only the splendid stories. So if old Bruce, who had traded for Cadotte on Lake Winnipeg in 1795 or so, had not really got forty-eight packs of beaver on a small outfit, as he told Warren in 1852, it was still better to remember it like that. ◆

A note on sources. *The most important sources of information used here were post journals of the Hudson's Bay Company from Brandon House, Shell River, Fort Dauphin River and Post Doubtful. (Permission to quote from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, is acknowledged with thanks.) An important memoir of Jean-Baptiste Cadotte's part in the story is contained in W. W. Warren's* ***The History of the Ojibway Nation*** *(Minneapolis, 1970); Warren was Cadotte's great-nephew, and had information from actual participants. A rather mysterious itinerary published in the* ***Wisconsin State Historical Society Proceedings****, vol. 43, page 202 (1915), may now be recognized as referring to Laviolette's inward voyage in the summer of 1794. Other critical pieces of data were found in the North West Company Letterbook, F.3/1, in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives; in the Narrative of J.-B. Perrault* ***(Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections****, vol. 37); W.S. Wallace (ed.),* ***Documents relating to the North West Company****; W. Kaye Lamb (ed.),* ***The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie****; and various published North West Company traders' journals and well-known secondary sources. Information about the Trotier-Desrivières family came principally from Tanguay,* ***Dictionnaire généalogique des familles canadiennes,*** *and from the Roman Catholic church registers of Notre-Dame-de-Montréal, Michilimackinac and Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes.*

PLACER MINING

By M. G. Treilhard

Author Mac Treilhard has worked across Canada, including the High Arctic, as a development miner, roughneck, fisherman and commercial diver. He is currently writing a book on mining personalities in the Canadian Northwest. Photographs are by Mungo Treilhard.

Higher prices for gold have given Yukon miners a welcome increase in profit after many years of hand-to-mouth living.

PLACER MINING IN CANADA is an industry confined to British Columbia and the Yukon. While the Caribou Gold Rush of the early 1860s is credited with opening up the interior of British Columbia and setting in motion events which led to the construction of the transcontinental railroad, similarly, the Klondike Gold Rush initiated the settlement and development of the Yukon Territory.

Most placer diggings are notoriously short-lived. The rich ground is usually mined out within a few years and the towns built around them soon go into decline, though marginal ground may continue to be mined for many years.

Dawson in the Yukon is an instance of a placer mining camp which has continued to produce important amounts of gold for some 80 years after its best deposits were exhausted. The long life of the camp may be attributed to its exceptionally rich ore deposits, the introduction of new mining technology, and the recent rise in the price of gold.

The men who stampeded the Klondike in 1898 relied on primitive means to exploit the creeks. Yet, in 1900, they produced an estimated $24 million in gold — more than one-third of Canada's federal budget for that year.

Soon after the discovery of Klondike gold, plans were made for more efficient large-scale mining in Dawson's gold creeks. As early as 1901, the first dredge began work on Bonanza Creek and proved its practicability by immediately turning a profit. In the years that followed, whole fleets of dredges were built and put into service.

Two financiers, A.N.C. Treadgold and Joe Boyle, alternately dominated Dawson's dredging enterprises for the first few decades. The history of their activities amounts to a free-for-all in which each man sought exclusive control of dredging operations in the Klondike.

By the early 1930s, inefficient management had very nearly ruined the dredging companies — which had by then combined to form the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation. To ward off bankruptcy, the corporation's management was changed in 1934, and a staff of engineers was placed in control. Under their direction, Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation operated at a profit until it ceased operations in 1966. With up to ten giant dredges working simultaneously, the corporation produced gold valued at $58,767,368 during the 1932 - 1966 period.

From that year until today, placer mining in the Klondike has been carried on by numerous small companies that are re-working ground that has been gone over at least twice in earlier times — first by the original stampeders and then by the dredges. These modern miners use bulldozers and other heavy equipment in operations given fresh life by the recent upsurge in gold prices.

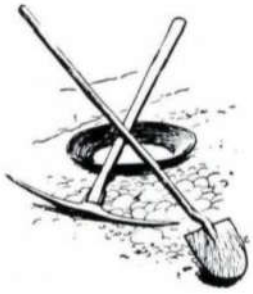
The increase in the price of gold in the early seventies caused an explosion of activity in Yukon's placer mining industry. A stream of helicopters and four-

wheel drive vehicles invaded the country around Dawson and speculators staked any property which had even the remotest chance of containing gold. Major mining companies sent in representatives to investigate the possibilities of resuming large-scale mining in the region. Many small mining companies sprang up overnight and disappeared just as quickly.

When the commotion began to subside, it was apparent that little had changed in Dawson. The speculators vanished leaving many of their customers holding worthless ground. A handful of new companies managed to operate successfully. But most of the previously established mines remained intact and it was these that derived the greatest benefit from the increased gold price.

To have operated successfully when gold was fixed at $42 an ounce or less, Dawson's existing placer mines had to occupy the best properties. When the gold price increased, it far outstripped inflation and left the established miners earning a welcome increase in net profit after many years of hand-to-mouth living. Today, 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the territory's placer gold production still comes from those mines which existed prior to the 1970s.

Two relative newcomers to the Dawson mining community are Raymond Brisebois and Mark Pearson. I met them during a visit to Dawson in the summer of 1983 and, seated in the lounge of the Westminster Hotel, I asked about their experiences in placer mining.



Ray, originally from Gatineau, Quebec, came to Dawson during the seventies boom to find a mine. He prospected for five years, sinking exploratory shafts in various locations, but has yet to find a promising property. He has had two partners, but each ran low on morale and left. Ray explains that prospecting 'requires courage because you give up all your security to chase a dream. But you can't quit when things get tough, because if you do your dream goes down as just another fantasy.'

Mark Pearson and his family came to Dawson within a year of Ray's arrival. They bought a half-interest in a proven property and so avoided the trials of prospecting. 'It's finding the gold which is the hard part,' says Mark. 'The actual mining is relatively simple.' Nonetheless, the Pearsons invested six years of unrewarded effort before their mine began to pay for itself.

For newcomers lacking substantial financial resources, getting a start on the Dawson placer creeks is becoming increasingly difficult. At one time it was possible to mine profitably with a minimum of equipment; now a paying mine requires heavy earth-moving machinery which is expensive to purchase, operate and maintain. Also, good unstaked ground is difficult to find and government fees are an increasing burden.

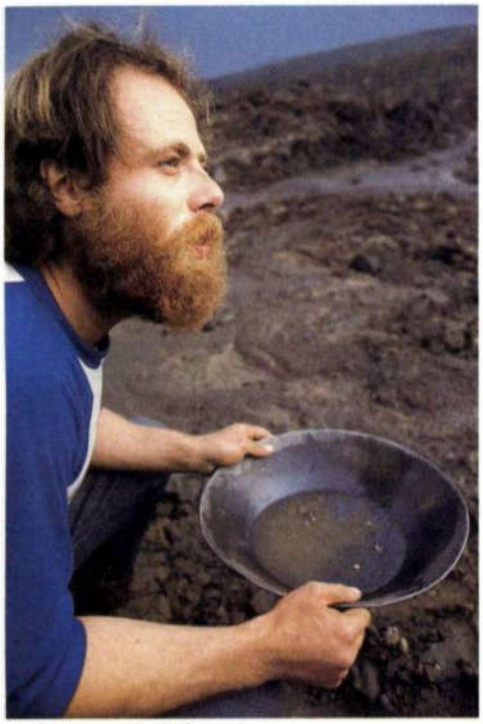
The Pearsons' mine, like many in the district, is a family concern. There are a number of distinct advantages to family operations, ranging from simplified bookkeeping to a capacity to weather difficult times when family members are willing to forego wages if necessary.

When questioned about the amount of gold their mines produce, an outsider will find many miners understandably close-lipped. Thefts of gold are not unheard of, but the amount stolen is usually small and the culprit is soon caught. In most cases, the thief makes an after-hours visit to a sluice box and removes ore that has been collected there since the last clean-up. To avoid this, some operators have taken to cleaning their boxes after every shift.

One old-timer tells of a Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation employee who stole a quantity of gold from one of the dredges in the 1940s. He kept the dust until the end of the season when he tried to ship it out to Vancouver in a washing machine. 'Now most people wondered why the hell was he sending a washing machine from here to Vancouver, and he was caught at that point,' said the miner. 'Now, if the guy had had an ounce of brains, he'd have staked a claim, sunk a shaft and said he'd mined the gold...but I'm not suggesting anyone should do that.'

Most of the Dawson mines follow a common procedure when shipping their ore. Once they have accumulated an adequate amount of gold dust, it is packaged and taken to the town's only bank — the Bank of Commerce. There it is weighed and the owner is given a receipt. The bank then oversees the payment of shipping, smelting and royalty costs, and charges a $200 fee of its own for the service.

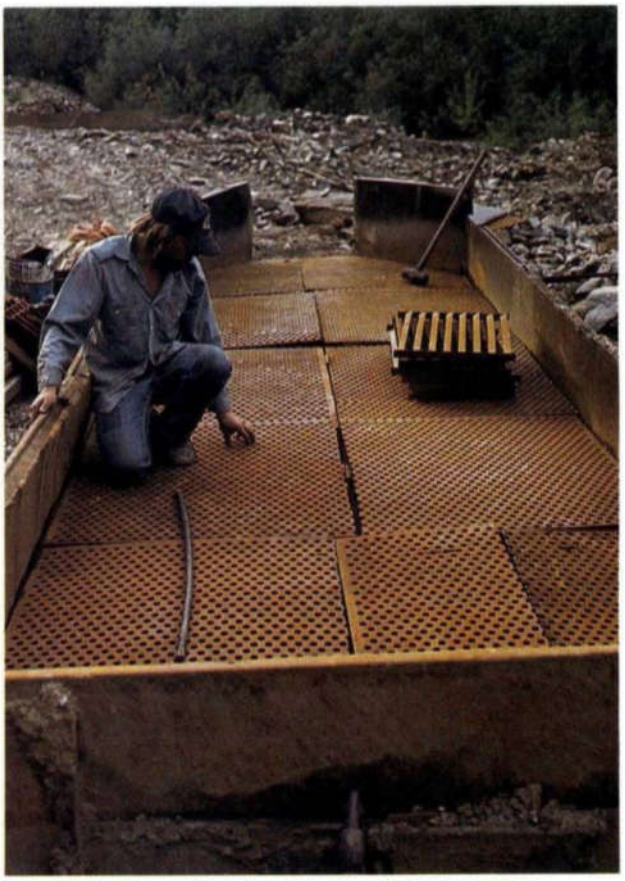
Art Fry is one of the last men living in Dawson who arrived there prior to the depression years of the 1930s. Now 71 years old, he still has a powerful frame and puts in a daily shift on his property — the King Solomon Mine. He is uncharacteristic of most persons in the mining industry in that he holds strong left-wing political convictions. During the forties, while an



Mark Pearson checks for 'colour' at the family placer claim.

Art Fry operates a bulldozer on his placer claim on Bonanza Creek.

Ore-bearing gravel is washed through a sluice box where the gold is separated.



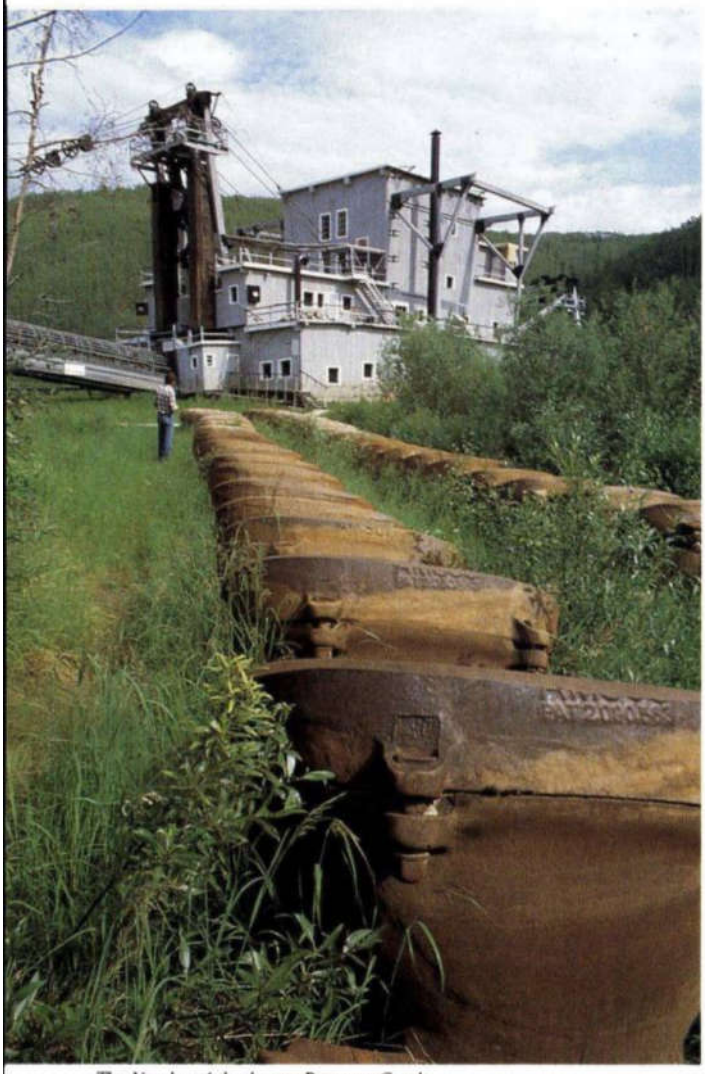
This sluice box has just been cleaned by removing the metal plates and retrieving the gold that has fallen through the grid.

Lowell Bleiler (left) president of the Yukon Placer Mining Association, with members of his immediate family who work the Bleiler claim on Hvatt Creek.

A Dawson City resident.

employee of Yukon Consolidated Gold, he was instrumental in bringing in the communist-controlled mine-mill union and a CCF political organizer. He also once toyed with the possibility of setting up a co-operative gold mine but shied away from the idea because he was 'afraid of people's greed'.

Another long-time placer miner in the northern Yukon is Ed Bleiler, who is also in his seventies. Like most Yukoners of his generation, the onset of the Depression was a major factor in bringing him to the Yukon. At a time when work was impossible to find outside, the Yukon was a land of opportunity. Ed concedes that necessity forced him to come to the territory, but added that 'the lifestyle was also very attractive. You had the freedom of an outdoor life and the opportunity to make enough to live on without having to go around begging for a job. When I first came here you could always dig out a little gold, catch some fur, or do other things to make a living independently.'



The Number 4 dredge on Bonanza Creek.

Today, Ed and his family operate Bleiler Placers Ltd on Hyatt Creek, which lies some 25 miles northeast of Mayo. While Dawson is the centre of Yukon placer mining and accounts for 85 per cent of the territory's gold production, the mines in the Mayo region contribute a further 10 per cent.

The Bleilers' Hyatt Creek mine has been worked for more than eighty years, and has been the richest and most productive in the area. Always a family concern, it is operated today by three generations of Bleilers who live on site during the summer, and then leave to winter in Vancouver when the weather makes mining impossible.

Reminiscing about the territory as it was when he first arrived, Ed noted that it was 'a country of bachelors, most of whom were very independent and full of wonderful stories. Those men would probably all have liked to have married but stayed single owing to the demands and uncertainty of their work. Placer mining has characteristically been an all-male occupation.'

Since the early seventies, however, increasing numbers of women have become involved in the practical side of mining. Where they may once have been relegated to bookkeeping, wives and daughters are now running 'cats' and tending sluice boxes. In fact, a number of miners hire female help before they will take men, claiming that women are more reliable.

Perhaps Ed spoke for many of his fellow miners when he said he was grateful to have lived such a rewarding life. 'I feel the Yukon has been good to me, and I'm thankful for the old-timers who broke the trail for us and showed us the way up here.' ◆

The author acknowledges the assistance of the Canada Council and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in his research for this article.

The Two Worlds of Mikak

By J. Garth Taylor

Mikak. Detail from the portrait by John Russell, 1769.

Part II

When Mikak returned from England, she married Tuglavina, an aggressive middleman in the baleen trade with the northern Inuit. The account of her stormy marriage provides rare insight into Inuit life in the eighteenth century.

The author is Arctic Ethnologist with the National Museum of Man, Ottawa. *He is grateful to the various archives which allowed him to use these manuscripts and to his wife, Dr Helga Taylor, who translated most of the relevant material from the original German.*

THE COMMUNITY OF NAIN, founded as a Moravian mission station more than two centuries ago, has been called the 'Eskimo capital of Labrador'. Among the Inuit who witnessed the birth of Nain, none had contributed more to that event than Mikak. During her captivity in London, she had voiced her support for the mission proposal both to the Moravians who originated the idea, and to 'those of rank and influence' who helped secure the necessary government approval. Back in Labrador, she had prepared her people for the arrival of the newcomers, thereby helping prevent the misunderstanding and bloodshed which had characterized so many of the earlier contacts between Labrador Inuit and Europeans. And it had been Mikak, together with her new husband Tuglavina, who had guided the Moravian exploration party along an uncharted coast to a safe anchorage in Nain Bay.

More than a year had gone by when, on 25 August

Public Archives of Canada C-86644

Early view of Nain, founded in 1771 as a Moravian mission and now the oldest permanent settlement on the north coast of Labrador. Photograph by Robert Bell of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1884.

1771, Mikak met the missionaries again. Around the little harbour where she spotted the mission ship, hundreds of fresh tree stumps signalled that this time the Europeans had come to build and stay. At the foot of the mountain which sheltered the harbour from the north stood an eight-foot-high palisade, the result of two weeks' hard labour. Only an unfinished stone foundation showed where the house would stand and, though the short Labrador summer was almost over, the missionaries were observing their Sunday work taboo.

After pitching their tent, Mikak and Tuglavina were fetched aboard the ship by their old missionary acquaintance, Jens Haven. The captain, whom they remembered from the previous summer, invited them into the cabin and 'they were served best by him'. Mikak, who was wearing the gold-trimmed costume which the Dowager Princess of Wales had given her in London, impressed her hosts as 'something special to see'.

A few days after this cordial reunion, Mikak departed with her family to hunt caribou, then in prime condition for winter clothing and bedding skins. During the course of their autumn hunt, Mikak and Tuglavina made two short visits to Nain, where they sold some caribou meat and salmon. On their second visit, Mikak became ill with what the missionaries referred to as 'Mutterkrankheit', vaguely defined in a contemporary German-English dictionary as 'a hysteric Fit of the mother'. Whatever the precise nature of this mysterious complaint, Mikak had to be carried to the boat and covered up in a bed when her family sailed away four days later in search of more caribou.

Mikak had apparently recovered when, after a very unproductive caribou season, she came back to Nain in early October. The ship had by now returned to England, leaving the mission party — three married couples and eight single brethren — to face their first Labrador winter in the newly finished house. Keeping

an earlier promise, the missionaries presented Mikak with some beads, fishhooks and thimbles which had been sent by the Moravian congregation in London. These gifts had been purchased in the name of the royal family and were intended to reciprocate for the fox furs which Mikak had sent the dowager princess the previous summer.

During their brief visit, Mikak's family attended the first Inuit assembly in the prayer room of the mission house. It reminded Christen Drachard of their meetings in the cabin of the *Jersey Packet*, when Mikak and Tuglavina had guided the mission ship to Nain Bay in 1770. However, the sixty-year-old missionary felt that Mikak did not show the same 'love and trust' toward the missionaries that she had on that occasion. There was further disappointment in the morning, when Mikak and Tuglavina declined an invitation to spend the winter at Nain.

Mikak came to Nain only once that winter, even though the island where she lived was only a half-day trip by sled. When she did come, it was to trade 'a large quantity' of seal blubber at the store which the Moravians operated. But when the missionaries tried preaching to Mikak and her husband, the Inuit couple seemed 'so wild and scatterbrained they did not want to listen or reflect on it'. After sleeping on a bed of caribou fur which the Moravians made up for them, they left for home at daybreak.

One month later, Tuglavina came to Nain without Mikak and made a surprise announcement: he and Mikak and her young son Tutauk would sail to London on the mission ship that summer. He brought Mikak's things, packed in two trunks and three sealskin bags, and asked the missionaries to store them until the ship arrived. Their motive for the proposed trip was 'to get another boat, because theirs is too small and starts getting old'.

The missionaries agreed to store Mikak's luggage but told Tuglavina that he and his family could not find passage on the ship. They explained that the King had forbidden the captain to bring any more Inuit from their country to England. Tuglavina became 'very serious and quiet', but seemed to recover his composure when the explanation was repeated to him once more.

Tuglavina may have had an ulterior motive for storing Mikak's luggage at the mission. It was later learned that the families of Mikak and Tuglavina had become involved in a growing dispute with another group of Inuit in the Nain region. One of the many grievances put forward by their opponents was that 'Mikak and others of her family, mainly her father, have many beautiful things which they do not share'. Therefore, it was learned, Mikak 'hides her things'.

The feud was threatening to turn violent in late March, when Mikak and Tuglavina, together with the latter's brothers, fled to Nain in search of protection. They announced that they were being pursued by three murderers, one of whom carried a hidden knife, and that they had been warned that their lives were in danger. The missionaries agreed to 'shelter the refugees' and even offered to chase the murderers away with their dogs if necessary. After spending a few nights in the mission 'guest house', Mikak and Tuglavina pitched their tent near by on the Nain beach.

Tuglavina gave the so-called 'murderous gang' one more cause for discontent when, about a month later, he took away one of their married women and kept her as his own second wife. The woman was Mikak's younger sister, the same girl who had been married to Tuglavina before Mikak returned from England, and who was subsequently abandoned by him because she had borne him no children. Now he was voicing the same complaint against Mikak, suggesting that she had somehow become barren because of her stay in London.

Although polygyny was a common and prestigious form of marriage among the Labrador Inuit of that time, Mikak let it be known that she was unhappy with the arrangement. It was assumed that she had given Tuglavina 'a stubborn answer' when, a few days later, she arrived at the mission house with 'red and blue eyes' and swollen face, complaining that her husband had beaten her. Meanwhile, Tuglavina had taken some of the trade goods from their trunks and had gone with his new second wife to trade in the north. Until he returned to her a week later, Mikak shared a tent with her recently divorced mother; the old woman had just been sent away by Mikak's father because she could have no male children and his second wife had two boys.

Mikak was again 'grieved at her husband's treatment of her' when, in April 1773, he temporarily exchanged her for the wife of a man named Pualo. The woman, Nochasak, was yet another of Mikak's sisters. Although wife exchange was a widespread Inuit custom, Pualo claimed to be 'dissatisfied' with the trade when he and Mikak, her body now swollen with a 'dropsical complaint', came to visit at Nain. The missionaries in turn spoke to Tuglavina after he had returned to Mikak, following his month-long trip with Nochasak. They asked him to stay with Mikak, and 'never to do this again', to which he smiled and promised.

Tuglavina found Pualo's wife more compelling than his promise to the missionaries. One year later — again in April — he exchanged wives with a reluctant Pualo who, after failing to get Nochasak back, admitted that he was afraid Tuglavina might kill him. Nochasak displayed a greater penchant for action when she escaped from Tuglavina, now described by the Inuit as 'having thoughts like a wolf', and made

her way on foot to Nain. Tuglavina arrived by dog sled a few hours later and, not touched by missionary pleas, he 'crept away with the woman during the night'.

A few days later, Mikak trudged into Nain dragging behind her a sled loaded with a few of her possessions. She complained that when Tuglavina had gone away to a spring camp with Nochasak, he had taken their tent and household effects along with him telling Mikak she could go to the *kablunat*. At Nain, she and her son found shelter with some relatives until, one week later, Tuglavina sent two drivers with a dog sled to fetch them back again.

Perhaps inspired by a growing anxiety for both his wife and his life, Pualo camped within sight of the mission house at Nain for the entire spring and summer. Then he moved away to the Arvertok area, a relatively safe 150 kilometres to the south, where he and Nochasak spent the following winter far from Tuglavina. He was even further removed from the source of his fears when Tuglavina and Mikak decided

Mikak was again 'grieved at her husband's treatment of her' when he temporarily exchanged her for the wife of a man named Pualo.

to winter inland, a seven-day sled trip from Nain, where they lived off stored caribou meat from the previous autumn hunt.

Pualo and Nochasak were still living near Arvertok when, in summer 1775, Tuglavina and Mikak sailed up in a new thirty-foot boat, recently made for them by the Moravians. On board were three missionaries from Nain who had hired Tuglavina to take them in search of a site for a new mission. Although the missionaries were 'worried that Tuglavina would start new problems', he apparently behaved himself and again promised that he would not take Pualo's wife any more. He continued to show goodwill on the return voyage when, after capturing a live caribou fawn, he and Mikak 'immediately donated it to the King' and asked the Moravians to send it to England on their ship. Their generous intentions were thwarted when the unfortunate animal 'died of sea-sickness' a few hours before reaching Nain.

Soon after their return from this southern trip, Mikak and Tuglavina set out on a two-month trading voyage far to the north. A Moravian exploration party met them in Nachvak, a productive whaling region 300 kilometres from Nain. When one of the missionaries tried to remind Tuglavina of 'those things he had so often heard in Nain' he found him unwilling to listen. Tuglavina and Mikak wanted to talk about nothing but the baleen they had accumulated from the northern Inuit and the frustrated missionary complained of 'a gloomy feeling' in their tent.

Tuglavina gave greater cause for gloom as soon as he got back to Nain. Discovering that Pualo had come to the mission in his absence, he called to Nochasak to come and spend the night with him. She ran to him immediately, a response which the missionaries attributed to the fact that Pualo was afraid of Tuglavina. The mission diary tells of Tuglavina's surprising reception:

> But Tuglavina kicked her and threw stones at her, which latter he had also done to Mikak. In addition, he cut off half of her large parka hood with his knife.

When Nochasak came to 'seek a consultation' with the missionaries in the morning she was described as 'almost totally naked, bloody and whimpering'. She was followed by Mikak and Pualo's daughter, who had now been taken by Tuglavina for a third wife. When the three of them went into Jens Haven's room and cried, the missionaries felt 'almost helpless to know what to do'.

Tuglavina was asked into the mission house for a 'talk'. At first he refused, saying that he wanted to have Mikak with him. Then, after great persuasion, she went out to him and he finally came to the house. He was 'quite embarrassed and pretended not to understand and said that his countrymen said bad things about him'. After the missionaries reminded him of a man who had been killed 'over a matter of women' two years earlier, he shook hands with them. The missionaries were worried by 'a bad look in his eyes' and had by now come around to the opinion that 'one cannot trust his promise'.

The stormy marriage of Mikak and Tuglavina now passed through its last winter. In late March 1776 a sled came to Nain with the message that Tuglavina thought he was dying and requested assistance from the missionaries. The two Moravians who followed the messenger to a temporary camp near the ice edge found Tuglavina's right cheek covered with a 'terrible boil about the size of a flat hand'. The boil had been 'much chopped' by Mikak, who had removed a large amount of flesh while trying to get the matter out with a small knife. Tuglavina showed a strong preference for the missionaries' treatment — a compress of oatmeal and oil— and was given permission to move to Nain so that he could remain under their care.

Tuglavina's face was still slowly healing when, five weeks later, he once again exchanged wives with Pualo. After the missionaries objected, he packed up his tent and belongings and moved back to the camp

from which he had recently come. He took Mikak's two sisters, Nochasak and Kunek, with him but left Mikak behind. She and her son Tutauk were soon fetched by Pualo, who took them to a spring camp in the opposite direction. This time it was permanent; Mikak would remain with Pualo.

Mikak must have noticed striking changes in her new, monogamous marriage. For one thing, she no longer had to tolerate physical abuse from someone said to consider her 'rather as a burden than a blessing to him'. Her new husband, Pualo, was a timid submissive man; in his own words 'like one who had no voice among the Inuit'. His was a personality that probably suited the independent, often recalcitrant Mikak who, as the missionaries noted on more than one occasion, 'always speaks before her husband'.

On the less positive side, Mikak probably had to adjust to a lower standard of living. Pualo lacked the wealth and resources of Tuglavina, who had become a successful middleman in the baleen trade with northern Inuit groups. Unlike Tuglavina, Pualo did not own a boat and his 'very small' sled was not always large enough to carry the family possessions from one camp to another. Consequently, he and Mikak frequently sought transportation assistance from others, including the Moravians, Mikak's father, and even Tuglavina, with whom she and Pualo continued to associate. Her new husband's lack of wealth and status did no obvious harm to Mikak's self-esteem; in fact, the missionaries complained that, though friendly to them, she was 'very arrogant' toward other Inuit.

During her early years with Pualo, Mikak showed little interest in moving to the mission or converting to Christianity. It was not until April 1779 that the missionaries, who had earlier lamented that her heart was 'not filled with the holy spirit', noticed a sudden change. At the time, Mikak and Pualo had just made their first visit to the new mission at Okak, founded north of Nain three years earlier. Back at Nain, Mikak announced that she and Pualo now wanted to learn the words of Jesus so they could soon be baptized, since 'there were many baptized people in Okak and only a few here'.

In keeping with her new resolve Mikak agreed, in autumn 1780, to winter at Nain for the first time. She and Pualo had initially planned to go to one of their customary winter settlements, fearing that they would likely suffer hunger if they remained at the mission. However, the missionaries argued that they should stay at Nain on account of Mikak's son Tutauk and stepson Nerkingoak, whom 'they would like to win for the Lord'. When Tutauk declared that he would also be sad if they had to leave the mission, his mother finally capitulated. Ten days later Mikak asked the missionaries to list her among the candidates for baptism.

Captain George Cartwright, whose fishing and trading establishments in southern Labrador eventually drew Mikak away from the Moravian missions. An engraving from Cartwright's three-volume journal published in 1790.

According to Mikak, her whole family now wanted to 'get to know the Lord'. They had just witnessed a special church service in which one married woman had been baptized and in which Peter, the first convert among the Inuit, gave an interesting testimony. He told the congregation how he had gone out sealing alone in his kayak and failed to catch anything. Then, on his way home he prayed to Jesus and, soon after, caught a seal. The same thing had happened two days in a row. For the assembled Inuit, who had just come through a hungry period, Peter's story could not have failed to excite interest in the new religion.

Mikak 'said much' about her intention to convert but paused for a moment when the missionaries asked whether she believed that she was 'all bad inside and not good for anything'. Instead of showing the face of a repentant sinner, she simply replied, 'Because I do not know myself, I do not know.' The missionaries wrote that Mikak's 'honest answer' made them very happy because 'usually the Eskimos talk very much to please'.

Mikak must have been disappointed when, one week later, the missionaries announced the selection of three new candidates for baptism. All three were from Mikak's family — her husband, her son and brother — but she had been left out. The mission diary does not record why Mikak was not included; likely

Courtesy of Alice Perrault

A rare picture showing Labrador Inuit in a skin-covered umiak, the type of boat in which Mikak made her risky but profitable voyage to Chateau Bay in 1782. The Labrador umiak had almost disappeared from the coast of Labrador when this photograph was taken at Killinek in 1906.

she was turned down by the lot, the old Moravian method of seeking divine guidance in such matters by drawing straws marked 'yes' or 'no'. However, whether Mikak felt she was rejected by divine providence, malicious spirits or mortal man, her frustration probably did little to encourage her early thoughts of becoming a Christian.

Mikak's relationship with the Moravians was further strained when the new converts in her family were admonished for 'heathenish' behaviour. She must have felt doubly resentful when Pualo, now called Abraham, was treated for 'colic' by a shaman and then, after the missionaries found out, confessed that Mikak and her mother had insisted on it. Several months later, Mikak became openly provoked when the missionaries spoke to her and Abraham about having let Tuglavina 'sing' to cure her sick son Tutauk, who had recently added the Christian name Jonathan to his adopted surname Palliser. For one who had accepted and even advocated European therapeutic techniques, Mikak must have found the Moravian rejection of Inuit methods particularly irritating.

Mikak had finally been admitted as a candidate for baptism when, in spring 1782, she made a decision which promptly halted her progress toward that goal. She and an apologetic Abraham, who hoped that the missionaries would not 'think badly of him', announced that they were going to travel to the European fishing stations in southern Labrador. The missionaries, whom Abraham likened to a 'mother', failed to dissuade them from their 'dangerous trip' and lamented that 'they are thus separating themselves from us'.

The last time Mikak had expressed an interest in going to southern Labrador had been in 1773. At that time she had apparently changed her mind when the missionaries told her that the dowager princess had died. On hearing of the death she is said to have shown 'excessive grief' and announced 'No! I no longer wish to go to England or to Chateau Bay!' It was a decision that probably saved Mikak's life. Of the estimated 200 Inuit who had gone south that year, some had perished in a storm and the rest either starved or died of 'an epidemic disorder'.

It is not difficult to find reasons why, nine years later, Mikak had changed her mind about going south. Excitement had been mounting in the Nain area since the previous autumn, when some Inuit had returned from a two-year stay in Chateau Bay and raved about the generosity of the Europeans they had met. The final temptation was probably a visit by Tuglavina, who by now had four wives and who declared that he would travel south as soon as the ice went away. Within a week, Mikak and Abraham made up their

minds to follow.

Mikak's son, Jonathan Palliser, accompanied her on the trip. Her stepson Nerkingoak, who had learned to read and write at the mission and had recently married a baptised girl from Okak, preferred to stay around Nain. Mikak and Abraham travelled by umiak, the traditional skin-covered boat which had long been superceded in the affections of most Labrador Inuit by the wooden boat of the Europeans. As if to make matters worse, their umiak was damaged by a falling rock during the winter and had to be repaired before they could depart.

Compared with such a humble departure, Mikak's return must have seemed all the more grand. It was announced to astonished missionaries on a late September day, when two boatloads of Inuit stopped at the new mission called Hopedale and fired a musket volley 'to imitate Europeans'. One was the familiar boat of Tuglavina; the other, a large fishing shallop with two masts, belonged to the proud new owners Abraham and Mikak. They had purchased the boat on part credit and had been told to return south with more payment the following year.

The travellers had been to Chateau Bay, the place where Mikak had been held captive fourteen years earlier. Mikak had not been to southern Labrador since that time and, from all accounts, she must have been very pleased with her return visit. The Europeans had given free gifts to both men and women. The most exciting went to Tuglavina and Abraham, who had each been presented with a gun, powder and lead, something the Moravians had so far refused to introduce among the Inuit. The two muskets were probably from British ordnance stores in St John's, part of a large shipment sent to protect southern Labrador settlements from the privateers who had been wreaking havoc since the beginning of the American Revolution.

In Chateau Bay the 'commanding officer' had shown great joy to see baptized Inuit and had expressed a desire to see more of them. He had frequently repeated that 'baptism is very good' and was angry with Mikak that she had not yet converted. His critical words probably still bothered Mikak when she and Abraham paid a 'very friendly' visit to the mission house within a day of their arrival in Nain. Mikak said, among other things, that she and her husband had thought about Jesus every day that they were gone and had been happy when there was a good sailing wind to bring them faster to Nain. The mission diary records that 'This time we answered them little because we already know her meaningless beautiful words.'

Mikak did not pay a single visit to the mission that winter. Nevertheless, Abraham clung to a naive hope that she could be baptized before going south and when he visited Nain 'spoke wonderful things of

J. Garth Taylor

Adam and Rachel Palliser, descendants of Mikak, at their home in Happy Valley, Labrador, in July 1983.

Mikak'. Tuglavina and Abraham travelled extensively, gathering baleen to take to Chateau Bay and 'working diligently' to get Inuit to follow them there in the coming summer. They promised that those who went would get free food, tobacco and alcoholic drinks. Moreover, if they would 'help the English against the Americans and the French', they would even get free guns. Needless to say, many heeded the call.

When Mikak finally came to Nain with Abraham, in late May, it was to fetch all their things for the upcoming trip. Abraham told the missionaries that they intended to winter in the south, and would only return the following year. Upon being admonished to consider 'his time of death', Abraham replied that, though old, he would still return from the south. He then touched his dirty coat and proclaimed, 'This coat which I wear is also old, but it will have to last until I come back and get new caribou furs for another one.'

Abraham would never get another coat. Within a few months of his arrival at Chateau Bay in summer 1783 he died of blood poisoning after cutting his finger. Mikak had received what would appear a more serious injury, a big axe wound in the left leg, but after a near scrape with death had managed to recover.

Mikak, though now well into her forties, was not to remain a widow for long. She was quickly 'taken' by one Sirkoak, who was not quite twenty years old and thus several years younger than her son Jonathan. During their winter in the south, Sirkoak suffered a tragic loss; his father and his elder brother were killed at Cape Charles, both by guns.

Sirkoak's father, the baptized Moses, had been accused by various Inuit of 'having bad thoughts' and

Dr L. Burry, courtesy North West River United Church

The late 'Big Joe' Palliser at Rigolet, 1950, wearing a 'medal' which, according to oral tradition, was among the memorabilia brought back from England by Mikak.

was shot by Tuglavina and John Aglolak, a young Inuk who worked as interpreter for the English at Chateau Bay. The murder happened in the house of the Europeans and according to Tuglavina, the Europeans had first 'wanted to help' but 'in the end they only stood still and made one single shot which hit Moses in the leg and Tuglavina and Aglolak killed him'. Aglolak then married the widow of Moses, Tuglavina's sister, with whom he had formed a 'secret understanding'.

The oldest son of Moses had been shot by Mikak's son, Jonathan, who got the victim's widow for a wife. After this incident, Mikak must have developed a strong aversion to family gatherings. She would lose her only son if her husband, Sirkoak, took the opportunity to follow Inuit custom and revenge his brother's murder.

Mikak's awkward predicament was somewhat alleviated when, within a year of her marriage to Sirkoak, she eloped with 'young Pualo', a namesake of her earlier husband. Sirkoak set out to bring her back, but 'fell down as dead' when Pualo fired three small bullets into his abdomen from a distance of about 10 paces. Though still alive, Sirkoak's recovery was slow; one of his wounds was still open when he visited Nain almost a year later. Pualo got to keep Mikak and became a close friend of her son Jonathan, who was about the same age as his new 'father'.

The remaining years of Mikak's life are poorly documented. She and Pualo lived mostly around Hamilton Inlet, where they found opportunities for trade and employment with the Europeans who had recently spread northward from their earlier frontier at Chateau Bay. When Mikak did go north, every three or four years on the average, she wintered away from the mission stations and seldom saw the Moravians. After her family achieved their objective, whether to hunt caribou for clothing skins or to gather up blubber and baleen to pay off debts to their 'new masters', they always headed south again.

In late summer 1795, Mikak sailed north for the last time. An undescribed illness had broken out in Hamilton Inlet and, like the other Inuit who lived there, Mikak had decided not to stay in a place 'where Eskimos keep dying'. On their way north, the two boats in which Mikak's family were travelling stopped at Hopedale. They carried several sick people, and the missionaries were asked to provide medicine for Jonathan's wife, who was the most serious case aboard. When she took the medicine, the patient seemed to recover momentarily but then, suddenly, she turned worse and died. A few days later, after Jonathan took a new wife from Hopedale, the boats continued north.

Mikak was also critically ill when, one month later, she arrived at Nain in search of 'assistance and advice'. She sent immediately for the head of the mission and, during the last ten days of her life, she 'seemed to receive his admonitions with eagerness'. When she passed away on 1 October 1795, she was about fifty-five years of age.

Two years after his mother's death, Jonathan Palliser moved back to the Hamilton Inlet area. When the Moravians tried to persuade him to stay at Nain and return to the congregation, Jonathan told them he had debts to pay in the south and that he also wanted to get a new boat. He was still living in the south in 1824, when a Methodist missionary in Hamilton Inlet met an elderly Inuk who, as a small boy, had been taken to England along with his mother. One of the old man's wives wore a gold-trimmed costume which his mother had long ago received from the mother of King George III.

Mikak's famous costume, along with other souvenirs of her trip, has long since disappeared. Nevertheless, there are still Inuit among her many descendants who can proudly recall at least some faded memory of 'the woman who was in England'. This is especially true for those of the Palliser family, who for over two centuries have carried the name which Mikak bestowed upon her only son after her remarkable visit to another world. ◆

Unbuttoning the History of Fort Rivière Tremblante

By E. Leigh Syms and Pamela Smith

FOR MOST PEOPLE, buttons may hold little or no significance beyond their obvious function as clothing fasteners. Others may be aware of the large variety that exists and have some appreciation of their decorative purpose. Very few people, however, realize that buttons can provide insights into the history of technological discovery and development, trade networks, and social relationships. Buttons found in an undisturbed relationship with specific buildings and activity areas of historic forts and other sites, are especially important. They are useful because they represent a specific period of occupation and are a reflection of the social conditions.

Fort Rivière Tremblante, a North West Company fort, was built on the upper Assiniboine River in 1791 and was used until 1798 or 1799 by Montreal trading partners. It was an important provisioning post for fur brigades travelling to the Athapaskan territory. Started by Robert Grant, it was later taken over by Cuthbert Grant Senior, father of the noted Métis leader of the same name. The fort has been referred to by various traders as Grant's House, Upper Fort and Aspin House.

The button sample from Fort Rivière Tremblante consists of 112 buttons, most of which are complete although some are merely crown fragments, backs or eyes. Despite the fact that these buttons are from an eighteenth-century western frontier post where one might not expect a lot of variation, there is a wide range in decoration, material, method of manufacture and size.

More than half of the buttons are decorated, yet no two are alike. Among the decorated varieties, the most common (and the most ornate) type is made of copper alloy with iron inlays on raised designs. These raised parts are leaves, swirls, or lines which are surrounded by less pronounced leaves, lines, and dots. Most of the resulting patterns are floral or star-like, although one has an oval design. The elevated portions were cast as part of the button face using embossed moulds. The iron was added later to the tops of these elevations.

Other buttons have cast patterns which have less relief and lack inlays. One highly decorative example is a Hudson's Bay Company beaver button. The unusual appearance of the animals on some of these buttons has resulted in a checkered history of their identification. They have two diagonal lines filled with oblique lines (forming a '+' or an '×', depending on one's perspective), and an outer border half-filled with leaves and scroll-like symbols. The four animals however, do not necessarily resemble the beaver. The Fort Rivière Tremblante specimen contains four identical animals, all facing in the same direction. The head has a short, curved 'snout', the body and legs are pig-like, except for the coat of fur, and the tail is short and stubby. Similar buttons from other sites have been reported to contain animals resembling porcupines (or hedgehogs), pigs, and even elephants. The pig-like animals on the Fort Rivière Tremblante button appear to have been created by a designer in England who had never seen a beaver and who had relied upon a verbal description.

Decorations on some of the other buttons were stamped or pressed onto a plain crown after the button had been either cast in a mould and cooled, or punch-cut from a sheet of metal. Stamping involved denting the surface with a punch and hammer, adding every detail of the design separately in a time-consuming and laborious fashion. Pressing was done in a single stroke whereby the button blank was shaped between two halves of a die.

Several buttons possess remnants of coatings. Most are metallic but a few were painted or lacquered. The metal coatings were applied by dipping the buttons into molten metals or by pressing a thin layer of metal

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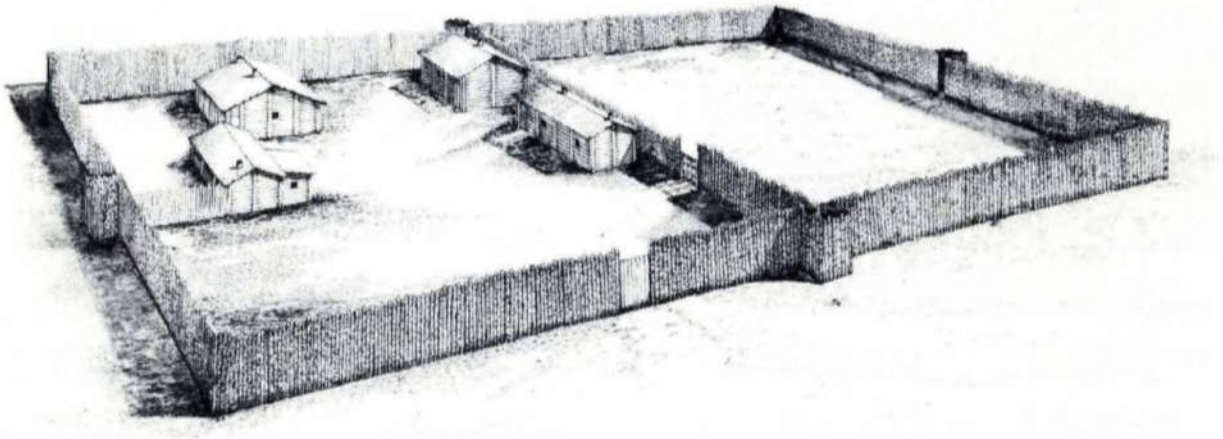
Pamela Smith, formerly a research assistant at the Manitoba Museum, is now a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Manitoba.

Famous Hudson's Bay Company beaver button (actual size is about 3½ cm in diameter). The beavers' unusual portrayals have led to their identification as a variety of creatures such as 'pigs'.

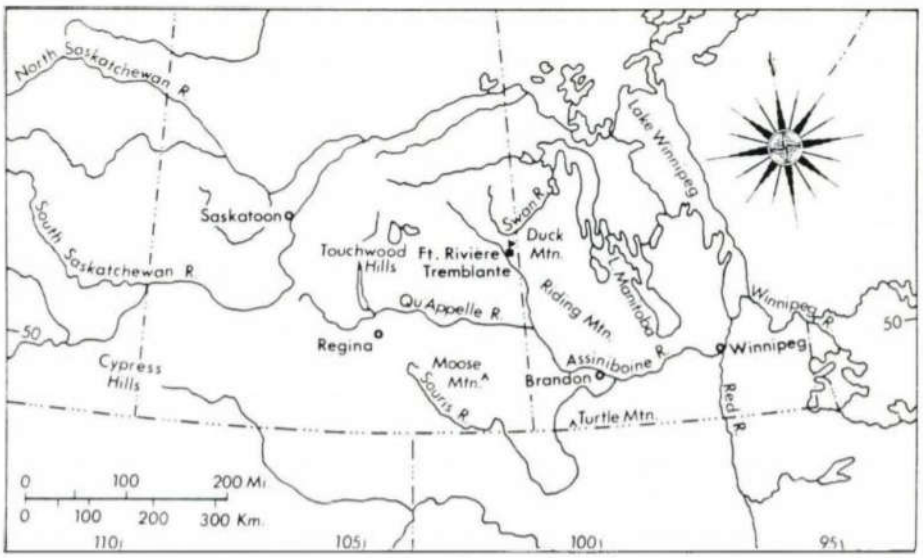
Boatmen had pewter buttons; traders wore them cloth-covered or in decorated metals; Indian chiefs displayed them in rows on the cuffs, pockets, tails and breasts of their prestigious 'great coats'.

Artistic reconstruction of Fort Rivière Tremblante as perceived by Hugh Mackie who excavated it in the 1960s.



onto the surface. The base metals were of a lower quality and 'gilded' with gold-coloured metals or 'plated' with silver-coloured metals to conceal this fact. Some of the plain buttons may have had similar coatings and others may have had cloth coverings, but the evidence has been lost due to the ravages of almost 200 years of burial.

It was not until the nineteenth century that buttons displayed extensive variations in shapes and materials as well as in their decoration. In the 1800s, varieties were common in fancy shapes of shell, cut glass, ceramic and even rubber. Often, composite buttons had enamel or gem insets, or designs placed under glass. Frequently, holes were made through the buttons, from front to back, similar to most types made today. Although the Fort Rivière Tremblante sample preceded this period and contained only round buttons, there was still considerable variety in the composition of the metals used. There are two general categories, white metal and yellow metal, which represent a range of alloys composed of different combinations of raw materials. The white metal buttons from Fort Rivière Tremblante are probably a type of pewter, as they were found to contain tin, the chief constituent of pewter. The yellow metal is copper or a copper alloy including tin, zinc, or both tin and zinc. Any combination of copper and zinc is generally referred to as brass. The early button-makers were not consistent in their selection of metals; often scrap metals of unknown composition were melted down



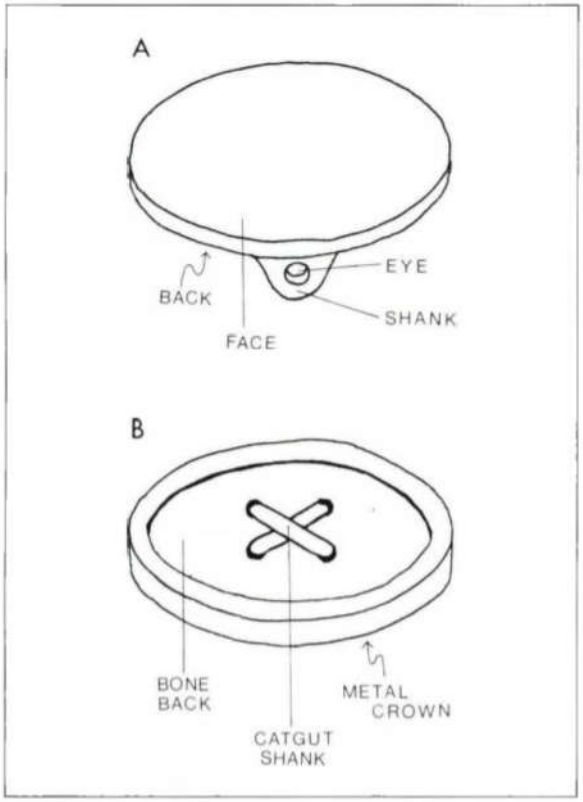
Fort Rivière Tremblante, located on the upper Assiniboine River.

and re-used. This inconsistency makes it difficult to identify the components of an alloy without laboratory testing. Because of this, most of the yellow metal buttons are identified simply as copper alloy. The copper is most readily identified by its characteristic corrosion products and its colour.

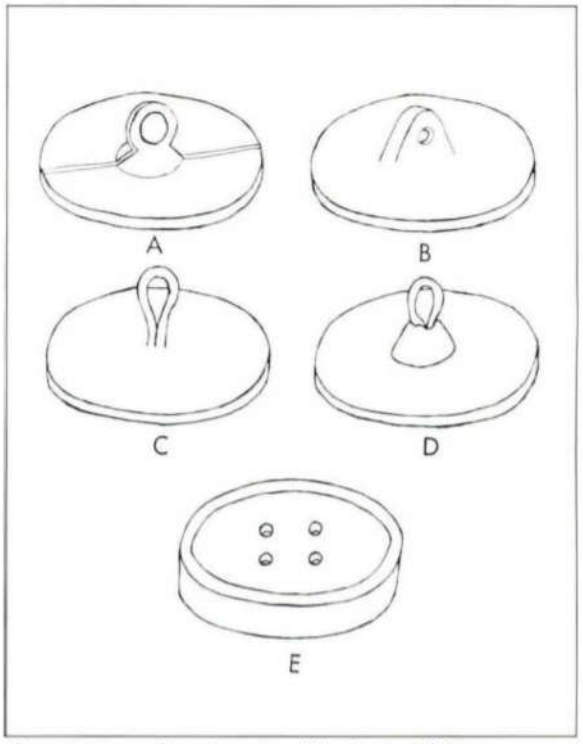
The most important trait used for identifying and dating the buttons is neither the decoration nor the raw material; it is the manufacturing technique, especially in reference to the way the shank is attached to the body. At Fort Rivière Tremblante, some shanks were cast in one piece with the button. Either the eye was cast as well (Type A), or it was drilled later (Type B). Other buttons have wire shanks which were made separately and either soldered to the back after the button was made (Type C), or set in the mould before casting (Type D). Some two-part buttons have metal faces and either metal, wood or bone backs with holes instead of shanks. For Fort Rivière Tremblante there was a predominance of single-hole backs of bone and metal, plus two four-hole backs of bone. The single-hole backs may have been fabric-covered with string shanks or they may have had a metal shank inserted through the hole. The four-hole bone backs would have had catgut loops crossed over the back and tied at the front. The metal-button crown was crimped over the edges of the back and covered the knot. Thread could be sewn under the catgut shank for attachment of the button to clothing. Often, only the backs or crowns are found archaeologically. At Fort Rivière Tremblante, eighteen loose backs were found and only two complete two-piece buttons were recovered. One has a flat brass crown; the other is also brass but has a raised crown with an impressed floral pattern. Thirteen loose shanks, broken from their buttons, were also found. Even these separated wire shanks provide insights into the manufacturing and attachment techniques.

Button size is a reflection of function. Buttons on the breast, the sleeves, and the pockets of a single coat may be of three distinct sizes. These may be different still from buttons used on vests and breeches. Studies of clothing styles from the time period of Fort Rivière Tremblante might indicate which articles of clothing are represented by the many sizes of buttons in this collection.

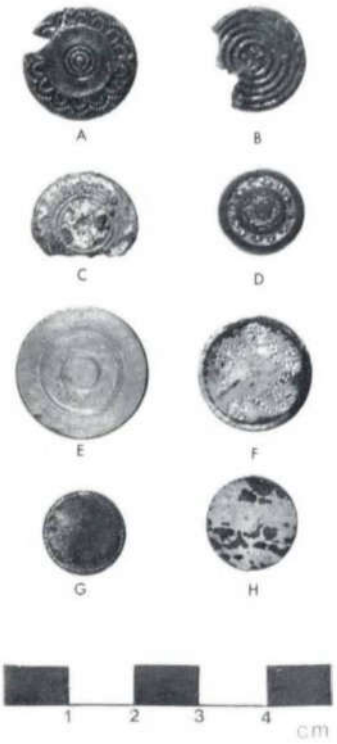
Most of the Fort Rivière Tremblante sample consists of one-piece metal buttons. By far the greatest number are made of a copper alloy which is probably brass. Of the four manufacturing varieties present, the most common involved forming the button around a wire shank (Type D). The earlier button forms (Types A and B), were cast with the shanks as part of the mould. The constant friction of the catgut used for attachment to clothing often wore these shanks through, especially on the soft pewter buttons. Forming the shanks separately from a more durable metal and soldering them to the button backs (Type C) did strengthen the shanks but it introduced a new weak spot at the point of attachment. Rather than wearing through, many of the soldered buttons broke. Later, in the 1800s, a slight modification in the shape of the shank greatly improved the durability of the attachments. The 'legs' of the shanks were bent over to form 'feet' which were then soldered to the button back. The increased area of contact resulted in stronger solders. During the years that Fort Rivière Tremblante was occupied, the shank legs were still unbent. Instead the buttons were often cast around the shanks (Type D), thus embedding the shank legs in a rise on the button back. It was still common for these shanks to become dislodged as their straight legs were



Parts of a button. (A) Front view of a one-piece metal button. (B) reverse view of a two-piece bone and metal button.



Button types. (A) One-piece, eye and shank cast with button, (B) one-piece, shank cast with button, eye drilled later, (C) one-piece button with separate wire shank soldered to it, (D) one-piece button cast with separate wire shank protruding into the mould, (E) two-piece button with a metal crown crimped over the edges of a four-hole bone back.



Above: Iron inlay buttons from Fort Rivière Tremblante showing the variety of decoration. No two are alike. Careful conservation measures have made possible the preservation of great detail, as revealed in these photographs. (A-C) starlike designs, (D) oval designs, (E-J) floral designs.

Left: Variety of decorative techniques not utilizing iron inlay. (A,B) mould cast, (C,E,F) stamped and 'silver' plated, (D) mould cast with 'silver' and 'gold' coatings, (G) mould cast and 'silver' plated, (H) plain with 'silver' plating.

Courtesy 'Plains Anthropologist'

A chief's coat, traded to an Indian on the Great Lakes during the same period as Fort Rivière Tremblante.

not deeply embedded. The buttons were quite thin and flat and the shank was not to be visible from the front for reason of appearance.

Comparisons of the various types of buttons found at several sites of known ages helps to date the period of manufacture for each type. In the 1960s, archaeologist Stanley Olsen compiled information on buttons from sources including dated excavations and shipwrecks. He was able to provide date ranges for the manufacture of certain types. His dates for the four types found at Fort Rivière Tremblante are: Type A, 1750-1812; Type B, 1700-1765; Type C, 1785-1800; and Type D, 1760-1785. Because these types exist in this collection from 1791 to 1798 or 1799, we can use this knowledge to refine the earlier proposed dates. Olsen's dates for the Type B and D buttons must be extended to include the 1790s. When these adjusted time ranges have been established, this information can then be used to help date sites of unknown age and to date specific buildings within a site where there have been multiple occupations. For this reason, archaeologists rigorously collect and study the entire sample, including incomplete backs and shanks, for clues to the manufacturing techniques employed.

The distribution of button types within a site often reflects social differences among the inhabitants. Unfortunately we cannot investigate these differences to the degree that we would like to at Fort Rivière Tremblante because the necessary contextual information, structure by structure, has not been shared by the excavator. The North West Company traders placed less emphasis on social distinctions among traders and other post employees than did the Hudson's Bay Company traders. It is likely, however, that some differences did exist. The boatmen would have worn the less expensive pewter buttons while the more affluent traders would also have had the more ornate and costly forms.

Flashy buttons were also used to decorate 'chiefs' great coats' which were given to leaders of the various Indian groups, such as the Assiniboine and Cree, who traded at the fort. These coats were made of coarse cloth, lined with brilliantly coloured fabric, and were heavily decorated with brass lace epaulettes and trim. The Indians were impressed by the magnificence of the great coats which were highly valued, prestigious trade items. The many buttons, presumably of matching sets, were conspicuously located on the cuffs, laced pockets, tails and in single or double rows on the breast. This resulted in the presence of thirty or more buttons on a single coat.

Because Fort Rivière Tremblante was a frontier trading post we would not expect the military to have been present. The lack of military buttons in this sample helps to substantiate this expectation. This is in contrast to the sites of military establishments from approximately the same time period, such as Michigan's Fort Michilimackinac where a large number of military buttons were found during the excavations.

In searching for clues to the unrecorded aspects of the fur trade, this button collection has proved to be of more significance than many people would have thought possible. The buttons have increased the understanding of this fort and they will be important for dating and interpreting other forts of earlier, similar, and later periods. Knowledge of the development of the button industry means that sites can be placed in relative time positions with respect to each other. For the archaeologist, the total sample — including backs, eyelets, and fragments — is informative, in fact, crucial. All of the decorated buttons differ from one another at least slightly, indicating that there are many garments involved and that only part of the story has been revealed. ◆

Storm-Bound in Early Spring

By David Olesen

The author, a professional dog-sledder, has travelled thousands of miles by dog-team: from Minnesota and Ontario to Manitoba, Hudson Bay and Great Slave Lake. He plans, at age 27, to continue this way of life for many years.

Photographs are by Kurt Mitchell of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

THE GALE BUFFETS THE WALLS of our small canvas tent. It is two o'clock in the afternoon. The storm has been blowing like this, without a hint of reprieve, for nearly 36 hours. Outside, the world is a white whirlwind of blowing snow. Buried almost completely by the drifted snow are our ten dogs, our sled, and the rest of the trail outfit. Inside, the two of us are passing the time in that odd mixture of restlessness and relaxation that only an arctic storm can bring.

It is 21 April, and we are camped somewhere near the watershed divide of the Mackenzie and Thelon drainages. We are still east of Artillery Lake — that much we know for certain. But yesterday's hours of travel were simply a blind westward march through the white-out, driven by a mounting easterly gale. By mid-afternoon, common sense demanded a halt. A circle pencilled on the map, with a diameter of ten miles or so, is marked 'Camp?'.

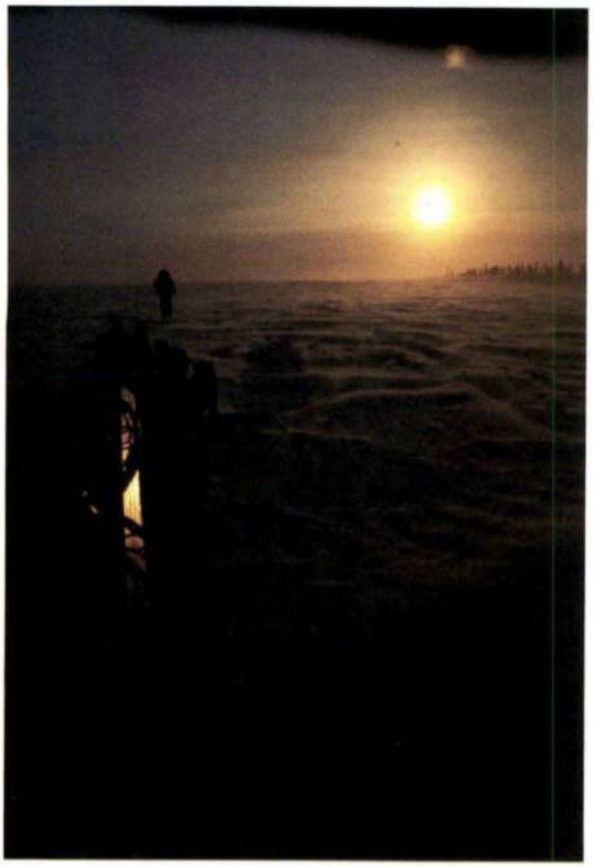
On calendars, the season of spring is now a month old. Yet here on the western edge of the Barrenlands, winter does not give up easily. Spring is an ephemeral season in the Subarctic — here one day, with bright sun and moderate temperatures, and gone the next in a howling blizzard.

For the last five weeks we have been on the trail, experiencing day by day this halting progress of arctic spring. Since leaving Yellowknife in mid-March, we have put over 600 miles beneath skis, paws, and sled-runners. Now we are on the final leg, from the Thelon Game Sanctuary back to the tiny outpost of Fort Reliance on Great Slave Lake. With only three days of food for ourselves and our dogs remaining, we have been stopped by the storm. At the first sign of a break, we will be on the trail again, to make our way down Artillery Lake, over the 25 miles of Pike's Portage, and onto the ice of Great Slave.

Interspersed among this and other blizzards during our journey, the signs of a northern spring are evident. To notice them, one must look closely, and be mindful of the season's slow advance. Nights are dwindling rapidly toward the time of endless daylight. The caribou of the Beverly herd are well on the way to their calving grounds, moving steadily north and east through the Thelon River country. The goshawks have returned. Soon, perhaps, the softening snow will be marked by the track of a barren-ground grizzly, drowsily searching for a long-awaited breakfast. Even the wind that has kept us pinned down here today is a sign of spring. Though strong, it is no match for the true blizzards of winter. And, we tell ourselves, it can't last too much longer.

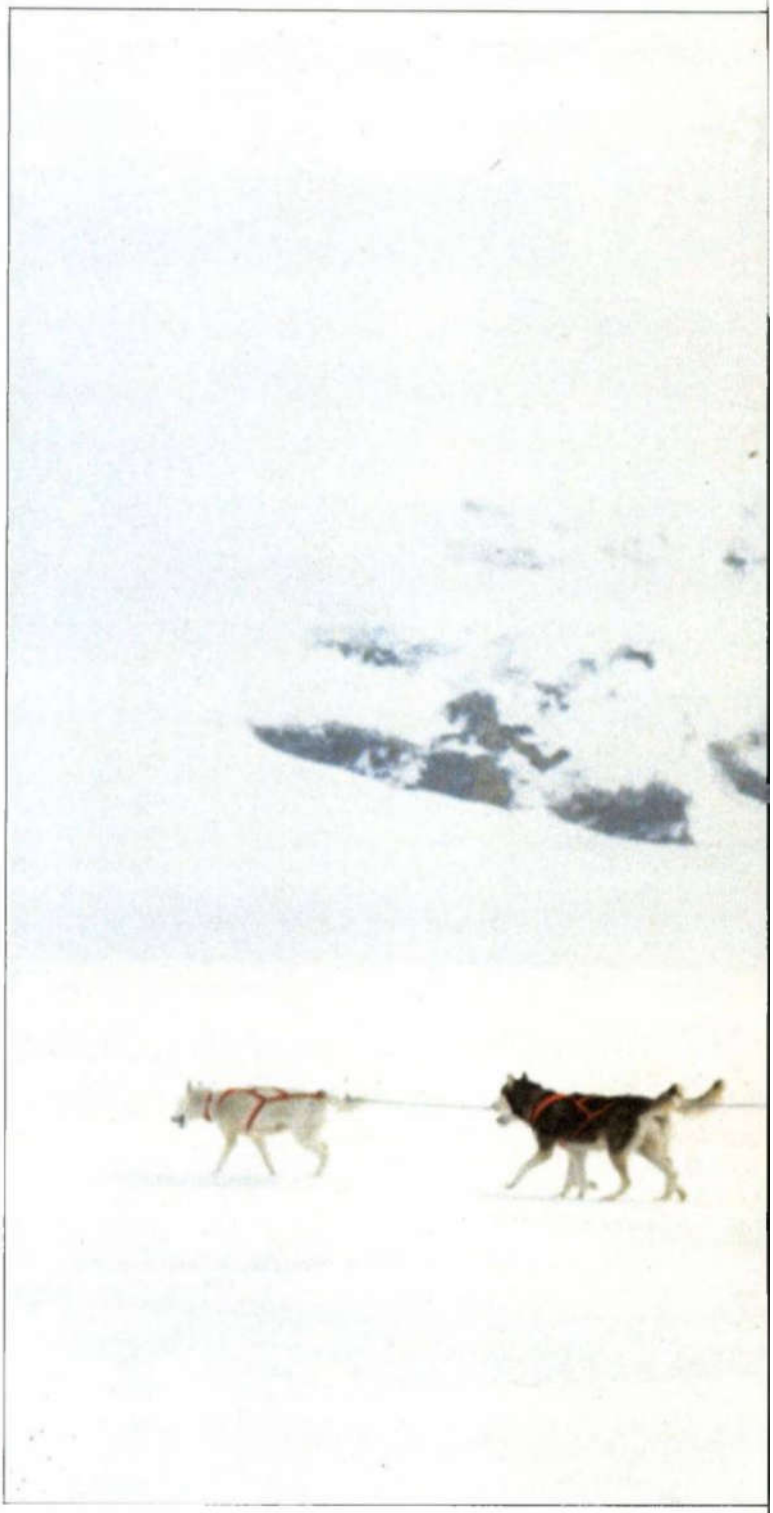
Despite the windy, unpredictable weather, early spring is an excellent season for dog-team travel on the Barrens. Winter's extreme temperatures have moderated somewhat, though minus forty is a common overnight low even in mid-April. Good snow conditions can make for rapid travel on skis and by dogsled. The length of daylight easily allows a full day's journey without a need to make or break camp in the dark. There is a feeling of impending change in the mood of the land, as the long winter slowly loosens its grip. When we crouch behind the sled for a rest and mug-up of tea, the sun's warmth on our windburned faces gives a soothing preview of summer days to come.

Our trip has so far been anything but monotonous. First came the week-long trek along the north shore of

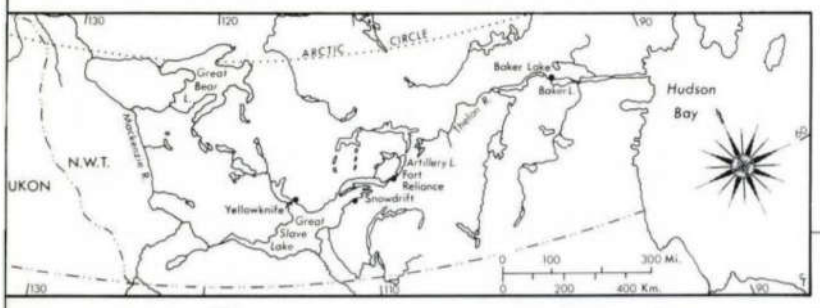


Dave Olesen (top) leads his team into the setting sun on the Barrens between the Hanbury and Radford rivers. His objective is shelter from the wind in a grove of trees several miles ahead. The shadow at the top of the frame is the photographer's glove.

Dawn at a wind-blown camp on Crystal Island in Artillery Lake. Here with winds at 25 to 35 miles and the temperature at −20C, the drivers waited out the storm for three days.



John Mordhurst running the dogs along the treeless eastern shore of Artillery Lake. Snow, wind and clouds make visibility poor.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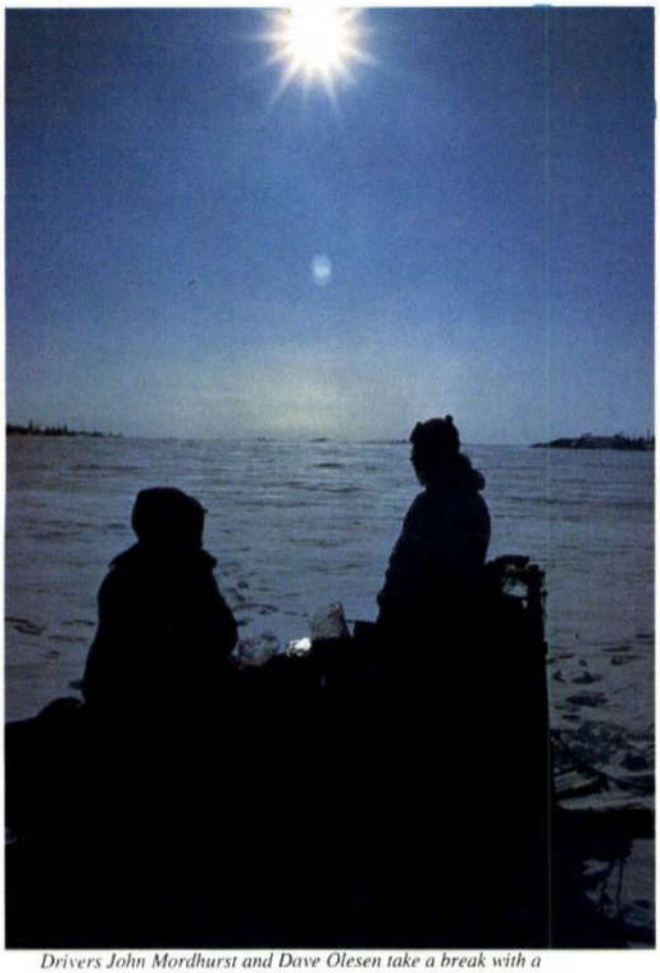


Drivers John Mordhurst and Dave Olesen take a break with a thermos of tea in the Hornby Narrows on Great Slave Lake.

Great Slave Lake, a 'shake-down cruise' to prepare us for the Barrens; then a stop in Snowdrift, a town of 300 on the eastern end of Great Slave. We rested briefly with the weathermen at Fort Reliance, and then travelled on — east past the treeline, into the true Barrens.

Two weeks ago, as we neared the spot on the Thelon River where Kurt and John had wintered several years before, a message reached us via a local hunter and pilot: John's mother had been hospitalized with a stroke. With a few words of farewell, John climbed into the tiny Piper Cub and was gone. He could fly to Yellowknife, and from there south to join his family. Our party suddenly reduced by one-third, Kurt and I ditched a sled at the Warden's Grove along the Thelon, and continued downriver for several more days.

Near Hornby Point, where the legendary John Hornby spent his final, fateful winter in the North, we were faced with a difficult decision. Baker Lake, the nearest Inuit settlement and our planned destination, lay about 350 trail miles to the east. Fort Reliance and Great Slave Lake were 225 miles to the west. With ten days of food remaining, and trail conditions worsening alarmingly with each day's eastward progress, we opted to loop back on our own trail and end the expedition at Reliance. It seemed more sensible to change our plans than to become the subjects of a large-scale search by being overdue in Baker Lake.

The trail back to Reliance has not been easy. We have faced nearly constant headwinds, and have been stopped for several days by violent storms. And now the journey is nearly over. With any luck this storm will blow itself out sometime in the night, and we will be able to move on at daybreak. The dogs, though trail weary and thin, will be rested after the windbound day, and we should make good time with our ever-lightening load.

The ridge-pole continues its persistent squeak as the wind sways the tent. A layer of blowing snow sifts through the door flaps, dusting everything with a fine, cold powder. Though we may be camped only a short distance from a stand of stunted spruce, we cannot see it in the white-out, and so our tent is without its Yukon wood-burning stove. We sit wrapped in sleeping bags and parkas, wool caps and mukluks, brewing a pot of tea on the little gas stove. Kurt is engrossed in a novel of ancient Japan. The hours pass.

My gloved fingers clumsily gripping a pencil, I write in my journal: 'Despite the delay and discomfort of a stormy day like today, we must remember... it is weather like this that has kept this land so empty. Its emptiness is its freedom, its freedom its beauty. This is a beautiful day!'

Spring on the Barrens. Filled with subtle changes, sudden surprises, silence and storm, it is a fascinating season in a powerful landscape. ◆

German pioneer farmers believed they had discovered a land 'of milk and honey' in northern Ontario. Later they learned about the killing frosts.

Krugerdorf

By Brenda Lee-Whiting

BECAUSE OF THE 30 MILES OF RAPIDS on the Ottawa River between Mattawa and Lake Timiskaming, the adjacent area was long inaccessible to permanent settlement, although lumber camps operated there during the 1850s. The waterway had been used by traders, explorers and missionaries as a means of reaching Hudson Bay via the Abitibi River.

As early as 1679 a trading post had been established in the region, but it survived only until 1688. Later traders were more successful. Fort Temiscamingue, situated on a point of land that juts out from the Quebec shore where the lake reaches its narrowest point, was controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company at the time of its abandonment after a fire of 1902. C.C. Farr who had been master of the Company's outpost, Hunter's Lodge, and later of Fort Temiscamingue, retreated to Haileybury, on the Ontario side of the lake, a community that he had founded some years earlier. There he had a substantial house and 30 acres cleared by 1887. So convinced was he of the agricultural potential of the region that he wrote a pamphlet in 1894 which claimed to be a factual description based on his 20 years of residence there. In essence, it anticipated the flood of government propaganda which promoted northern Ontario's clay belt in the first three decades of the twentieth century. They were all unduly optimistic.

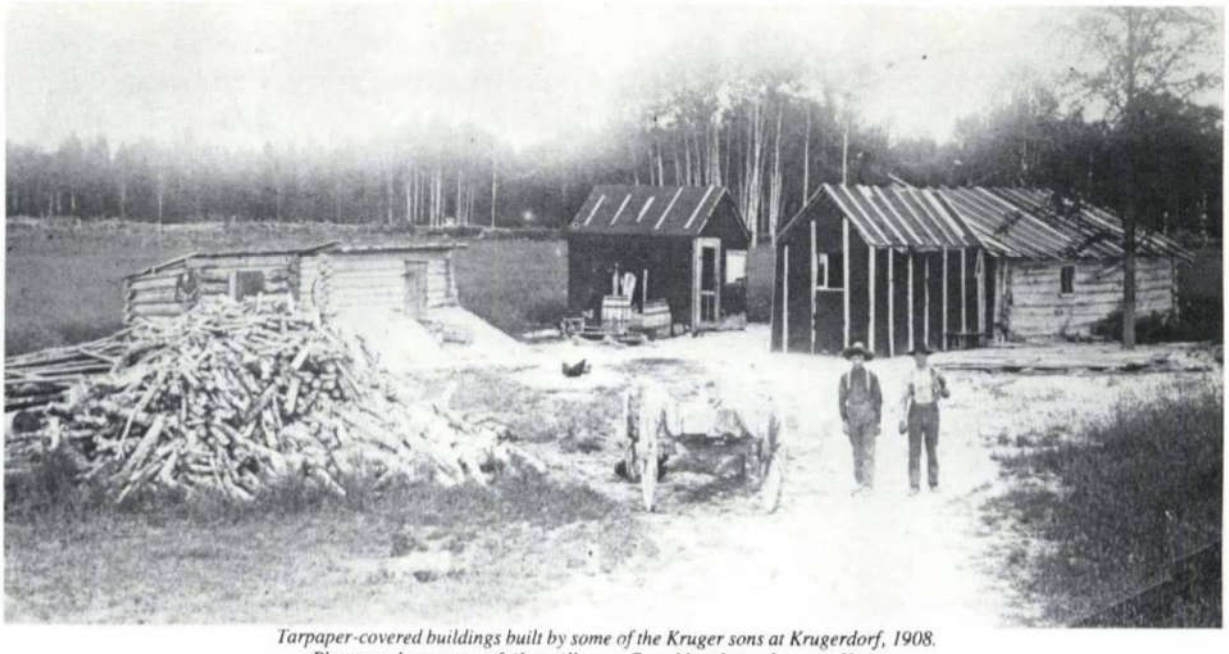
On 29 May 1891, public lands at the head of Lake Timiskaming were made available to settlers at the price of 50 cents per acre, subject to certain conditions. The purchaser had to reside upon the land for at least four years, have under cultivation at least ten acres for every 100 acres he owned, and build a habitable house at least 16′ by 20′. Twenty-five townships became available, about half a million acres of land in one continuous block.

The author, a microbiologist, lives in Deep River, Ontario. She now applies her training in research to documenting the social history of the Upper Ottawa Valley.

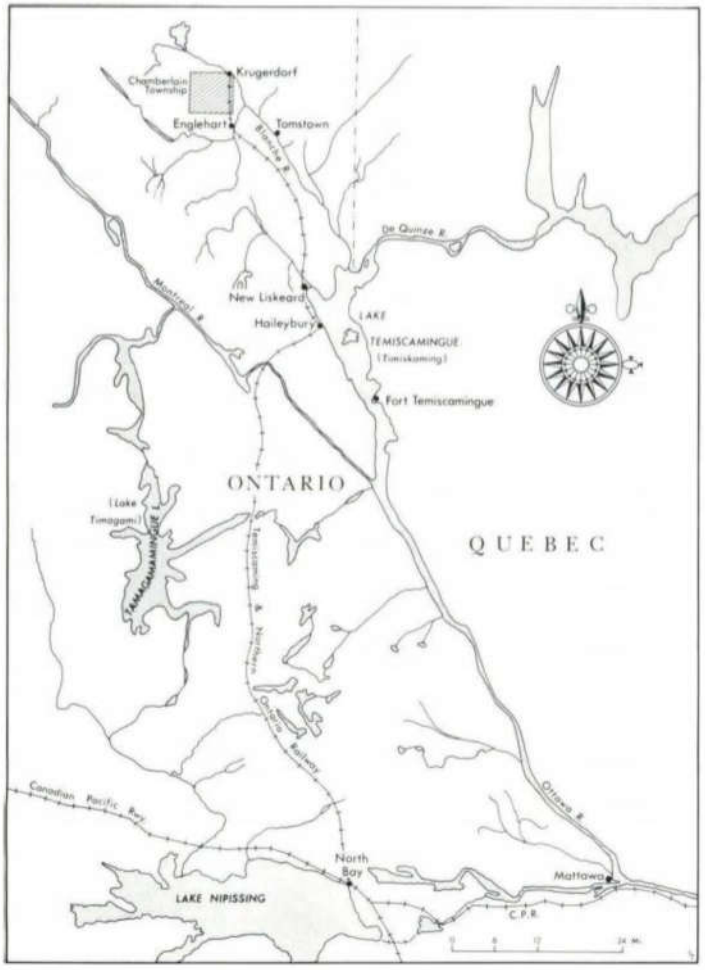
Settlers from the Toronto area travelled by train as far as Mattawa, via North Bay, and thence by steamboats plying on the still stretches of water between the rapids on the Ottawa River. It was a difficult journey and men were advised to travel without their families and livestock, to carry their own provisions and to be prepared to be patient. The advertisements stressed the splendid soil, the lightness of the forest cover, the steady demand for farm produce from the lumbermen's shanties and the certainty that railroads would be built from Mattawa (by the Canadian Pacific Railway) and from North Bay (by a Nipissing and James Railway) to Lake Timiskaming. In fact the Temiskaming & Northern Ontario Railway began construction out of North Bay in the summer of 1903 and was completed as far as New Liskeard in January 1905. Some of the men who were attracted to free land in northern Ontario did not wait for the railroad to extend beyond this station, and among these were the Krugers from Renfrew County in eastern Ontario.

The leader of this adventure was a seasoned farmer, 59-year-old August Kruger, who had also worked as a blacksmith in Germanicus in Renfrew County, Ontario, for at least 25 years after his immigration to Canada from Germany. He had been living in an area that had become densely settled by German people on small farms by the time of the 1901 census, an area where German was still the common language of the home and church. The father of two sons from his first marriage, Bill and Joseph, and five more sons from his second marriage, Frank, Adolph, Ernest, Albert and Paul, August must have realised that not all his sons could expect to own a farm close to home, though he had himself been able to purchase three lots in Germanicus (308 acres) from 'Free Grant' settlers in 1879 for $500. It was from this land that August Kruger and his son, Frank, set forth in 1905 to explore the land that had been described in such glowing terms.

The two men travelled to New Liskeard by train, as



Tarpaper-covered buildings built by some of the Kruger sons at Krugerdorf, 1908. Photograph courtesy of Alma Allsopp, Granddaughter of August Kruger.



far as the tracks were laid in the spring of 1905, and then continued by boat to Tomstown on the Blanche River and walked the rest of the way. Arriving at Englehart, they found that the lots there were already taken, so they proceeded farther into the bush. The land they found in Chamberlain Township must have impressed them, for the decision to locate there was made quickly. The two men constructed a small house and a blacksmith shop, then sent for the rest of the family and sold two of their three lots in Renfrew County for $975 in May. When Mrs August Kruger and three other sons made the trek to Chamberlain Township they took with them a large sow ready to farrow; unfortunately a bear made off with the pig on the first night it spent in a pen at Krugerdorf, as the new community was named.

At first, August Kruger worked as a blacksmith for the railroad, making spikes and shoeing horses, but the lure of the land was overwhelming. Renfrew County's German language weekly newspaper, the *Deutsche Post*, on 7 February 1907 reported that August Kruger had acquired 820 acres of land near New Liskeard 'where he and his sons are building a new homestead'. The availability of land had been communicated back to their erstwhile neighbours in the Germanicus-Golden Lake-Augsburg area of Renfrew County where German families were numerous. The Temiskaming & Northern Ontario Railway laid tracks through Chamberlain Township in 1906, right beside one of the Kruger homesteads, with the result that more young men from eastern Ontario visited Krugerdorf and were impressed.

One visitor in 1906 was Otto Kant, one of the younger sons of an emigrant from West Prussia who had settled in Renfrew County in 1871. Otto returned to his brothers with tales of 'milk and honey'. The land where the Krugers had settled was free from stone (incredible news to anyone who had farmed in the western townships of Renfrew County). The ground in Chamberlain Township was level and well-watered on three sides by the Aidie Creek and the winding Blanche River. It was by now easily accessible by a railroad that ran through 70 miles of wilderness, north of North Bay, before it reached the shores of Lake Timiskaming. Those who chose to pioneer in northern Ontario could take their household furnishings, farming equipment and livestock, an advantage that European immigrants had not known when they crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

Otto Kant moved to Krugerdorf in 1906 and because of his glowing accounts of life there two of his brothers, David and Edward, were persuaded to join him in later years — to uproot their families and try their fortune in farming. The oldest son of David Kant, born in 1898, retained keen memories of the move to northern Ontario. He knew that it was a spirit of pioneering adventure that prompted his father to leave behind a comfortable home and a secure job as section foreman on the railroad at Whitney. Ferdinand Eduard Otto Kant, nicknamed 'Fern' by an early schoolteacher, realized in later life that he had been fortunate to have received his primary education in Renfrew County. He was 12 years old when a cavalcade of families — the Kants, Richters and Digullas — left Golden Lake by train in May 1910, with the equipment that would be helpful in establishing a new home. Lumber was stacked on the bottom of two boxcars and on top of this went the livestock — pigs, chickens, two or three cows per family, and two teams of horses. The scene was a familiar one in Renfrew County; boxcars of Irish families and their effects were also heading north, travelling to countryside west of Englehart where they concentrated in an agricultural community named Charlton and known locally as the Irish Settlement.

The German families were travelling to Krugerdorf, where they would join people who spoke the same language. Eight miles north of Englehart, where the railroad crossed the Blanche River, the train stopped at a flag station and the boxcars were unloaded. The settlers' belongings were deposited beside the railroad track and had to be portaged in wagonloads to the new homes which would be located on lots of 160 acres. Lumber had been taken in order to build the first dwellings and barns, for there were no big pines to be felled and squared for use, as there had been in eastern Ontario. The first homes of the Krugers were merely tarpaper shacks and when a daughter was born to

Courtesy Ferdinand Kant

The Kruger sons build a house for their widowed mother, 1918. August Kruger died 27 March 1908, following a kick from a horse.

Courtesy Alma Allsopp

The Richters, the Kants, the Digullas and the Krugers combine to 'raise' a barn on the farm of Mrs August Kruger, c. 1912.

Courtesy Alma Allsopp

Adolph Kruger runs a steam engine that provides power for threshing oats grown at Krugerdorf, c. 1912. The family also had a steam-powered sawmill beside the Blanche River.

Frank and Annie Kruger in 1909 the mother feared that her baby would freeze to death.

With no large stumps to uproot, and with a rich clay soil, the farms were soon cleared and planted. The crops grew well and barns were needed to hold the harvest of hay and grain. Sawn lumber was available, for the Kruger family had established a steam-powered sawmill beside the Blanche River. Steam power was also used to run the Krugers' threshing-mill, another boon to the farmers.

'The soil was good, but the season was short and when you had grown anything there was no one to sell it to,' explained Mr Kant. He estimated that the growing season in Krugerdorf had at least ten fewer frost-free days, compared to Renfrew County where the adults had grown up. Some years the farmers would be surprised by a late frost in June or an early frost in August. (In 1979 there was a frost on June 23, as this writer can attest.)

The men earned extra money in wintertime by going away to work in the lumber camps, another tradition that had been experienced by their fathers in Renfrew County. In this community there was no need for home-made furniture or hand-made textiles. With the convenience of a railroad which could deliver goods from catalogues, the residents bought what they needed. There was a general store at Krugerdorf, operated by Moses Vertlieb, which supplied small items such as salt, sugar, candy and soft drinks. Groceries that were bulky might be purchased at Englehart, although the earliest settlers had to walk a round trip of 16 miles, there and back, and carry their groceries home on their backs, before roads were made to allow the passage of horse-drawn vehicles.

There was no doctor in the community. The infant mortality rate was high and the need for a burial ground became urgent even before the construction of a church. David Kant sold a piece of his property for a church and cemetery, and burials were made there for several years before a building, Zion Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod, was constructed in 1915 by the volunteer labour of the men of the congregation, including the 17-year-old Fern Kant.

'Before that time we met for services either at the Krugers' home or at our house, or at any place that was big enough,' he recalled. After the church was erected, a parsonage was built to accommodate a minister, for the congregation swelled and included members who came from Cobalt and Haileybury. The services were held in the German language, the everyday language spoken in the community, aided in its survival by the German catechism schools held by the pastor.

'I can remember reading my German catechism with one hand, churning the milk with the other and rocking the cradle with my feet,' recalled Mr Kant who was fluent in German. An elementary school, conducted in English, had been organized for the children, but the young girl employed as a teacher had received less education than Fern Kant who therefore felt that it was a waste of his time. His labours were considered necessary on the farm, as he discovered when he tried to enlist in the army during World War I. His father successfully opposed the attempt on the grounds that his son was needed at home.

Loyal to the country that their grandparents had chosen, there were other young men from Krugerdorf who left the farm in order to serve in the armed forces. One son of August Kruger's first marriage, William, had earlier chosen the army as his career and served with distinction in several wars, being awarded the Military Cross in 1918. Nevertheless, when World War II was in progress, a petition was sent to Queen's Park, Toronto, by residents of the Englehart district, which urged the provincial government to change the name of Krugerdorf to one of the following — Wavell, McNaughton, Battlewon, Bishop or Pioneer. By this time the rural community had dwindled in numbers and English-speaking immigrants from the Toronto area had long since diluted the German identity of the settlement. Mrs August Kruger was still living there and her youngest son, Paul, reacted angrily to the petition.

Voicing his displeasure to the newspapers in February 1941, P. J. Kruger described himself as a son of the Renfrew County family whose members were the first permanent settlers in that area. After relating how his family had located in Chamberlain Township about six months before the railroad arrived, Mr Kruger recalled, 'When the railway commission of the day took over the line, it was considered

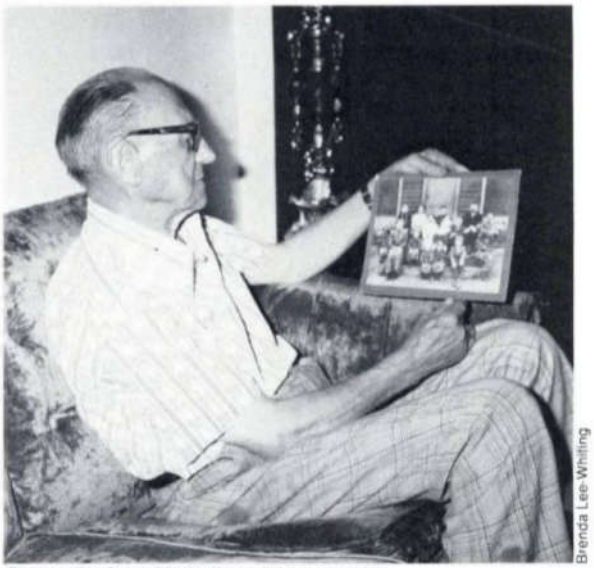
appropriate that the station there should be named after the first permanent settler, and that the post office, opened later, take the same name and not through any request of the Kruger family.' The petition to change the name was unsuccessful.

(Krugersdorf was the name assigned to the post office, but the community is still labelled as Krugerdorf on large-scale maps such as Englehart 31M/13, published by the Surveys and Mapping Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.)

The gradual decline of Krugerdorf as a viable place to live and work is reflected in the fortunes of the church which had its own pastor until 1924. The Reverend Walter Biesenthal, himself a native of Renfrew County, left the parish in 1925, although the church that year had 174 souls in its congregation and a Sunday school with 23 pupils. In 1924 there had been seven baptisms and 17 confirmations, but pastoral duties in future years would consist largely of burials and services from a visiting minister. And the services were no longer held in the German language. Many had left Krugerdorf to work in the mines of northern Ontario or on the railroads. Fern Kant's parents sold their farm after nine years of work and disenchantment; the father returned to working on the railroad, first at Connaught and later at Cochrane, where he died of fever in 1923. All three Kant brothers are buried in the cemetery of the Lutheran church at Krugerdorf. Edward Kant had already been buried there in 1918, and the third brother, Otto, was laid to rest in the same cemetery in 1973. On the 4th, 5th and 6th concession roads of Chamberlain Township, where there are farms growing feed crops and raising dairy cattle, names on the mail-boxes such as Quast and Digulla, show that a few descendants of the pioneers of Krugerdorf are still living there. David Kant's barn was well filled and sturdy 70 years after its construction, though his house had burned down in 1924. In the years of oil-lamps and wood-fired stoves, many dwellings were destroyed by flames, including the parsonage. Some of the old farmhouses are unoccupied but are still standing. Sagging and weather-beaten, they were built to a size that suggests large families and high hopes. The fields look fertile, flat and verdant, superficially an attractive land for farming, but the most obvious sign of industry based on land resources is a plant nursery on Aidie Creek, where greenhouses offer protection against frost. Not even a signpost on nearby Highway 11 points the way to the vanishing rural community that was once so self-sufficient. Gone are the store, the post office, the school, the sawmill and most of the original dwellings. Gravel roads, which are well maintained, bisect the township and give access to Englehart, markets for produce and all the amenities of civilization which were remote for the pioneers. ◆

Brenda Lee-Whiting

The Lutheran church, constructed in 1915, as it is today.



Brenda Lee-Whiting

Pioneer Ferdinand E.O. Kant of Iroquois Falls, who lived at Krugerdorf from 1910 to 1919.

Carvers of the Sagkeeng

Five years ago a program of wood carving was introduced to the residents of the Fort Alexander Indian Reserve in Manitoba. A number of talented carvers developed among the Saulteaux, whose ancestors were a part of the Ojibwa tribe who migrated to Manitoba from Sault Ste Marie in 1790.

Outstanding among the 'carvers of the Sagkeeng' is Wilfred Swampy, whose work 'Wild Rice Harvest' (51½" x 22") is presented here.

Sixty years ago, delphiniums ten feet tall and pansies five inches across brought crowds of tourists into the northern gardens of Kate and Otto Partridge. Today, the flowers still push their way up through the weeds in the remote clearing on Lake Bennett.

Photography by Leslie Cole

Ben-My-Chree,
A Garden in the Wilderness

By Leslie Cole

Leslie Cole is Whitehorse correspondent for 'Maclean's'.

THE FASHION, FINERY and manicured gardens of Victorian England were not unusual in Dawson City, Yukon, at the turn of the century. With a population of 30,000, Dawson boasted of the latest styles in gowns and impressive horticultural displays. Its title, the Paris of the North, was well-deserved.

Fashion and flower gardens were rarer in the remote outposts where miners and loggers made their living. But it was one of these outposts that became an icon of civilization for tourists who arrived after the Klondike Gold Rush had paled and left Dawson dusty and almost deserted.

An elderly English couple gave the homestead, Ben-My-Chree, its air of gentility and refinement. It was a style of living Kate and Otto Partridge brought with them when they came to the southern lakes on the Yukon-British Columbia border with the gold-seekers of 1897-98. They maintained their stronghold of British culture for the 30 years they lived in the area.

Otto came first, in the fall of 1897, and was among the gentlemen entrepreneurs who made money filling the needs of gold-seekers. He was an immigrant to California from the Isle of Man and his Gaelic traditions were strongly embedded. The name Ben-My-Chree was a phrase from his native tongue meaning 'Girl of My Heart'. For 1898-99, Partridge was manager of the Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company, overseeing construction of the first paddle-wheelers on the headwaters of the Yukon River. When the famous flotilla of home-made boats was launched on Bennett Lake in late May 1898, several stern-wheelers were among the scows. The Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company and its rival steamer companies played an important role in easing the loads of stampeders, who in 1897 had been forced to find their own way downstream to Dawson.

Kate came over the Chilkoot Pass in 1898 to join her husband and was quickly accepted in the dinner party and church-going social circle of Bennett, the tent city of more than 20,000 that had sprouted at the head of Lake Bennett.

In her diaries, started that September, she noted each invitation accepted and each occasion she played the organ at the Sunday service. Although the entries were cryptic, they showed an attention to events in the community's life that would soon be considered historic. On 24 May 1899, she noted, 'Queen's birthday celebrated with baseball, races, contests...publication of the first newspaper "Bennett Sun" and laying of cornerstone of St. Andrew's Presbyterian church by Mr. Hislop C.E. White Pass Railway.'

The 175-kilometre White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, under construction from Skagway on the Alaskan coast to Whitehorse, would put the Bennett Lake sternwheelers out of business by 1901 and move the service community to Carcross 40 kilometres east, at the other end of the lake. The bustling population of Bennett would dwindle from thousands to hundreds within a year. The *Bennett Sun* would move to Whitehorse to become the *Weekly Star* (now the *Whitehorse Star*) in 1900. And the church would be the only vestige remaining beside the railway depot at Bennett 80 years later.

Six months after Kate's Victoria Day entry, Otto saw a new business opportunity connected to the railway and the couple moved to Millhaven Bay, halfway to Carcross, to help establish a sawmill. The mill supplied ties for the railroad and Kate found herself the lone woman in a camp of loggers. The isolation from friendly civilization didn't keep her from practising the traditions by which she had been raised. Five days after they arrived at Millhaven Bay she wrote in her journal 'Sunday, October 29, hymn service in dining tent.'

On Christmas Eve 1899 she wrote, 'Decorated the mess tent ready for tomorrow. Three times this week it got colder and colder until it reached 29 below.' And on the day itself she noted, 'a fine dinner...many good wishes...some souvenir spoons...some Atlin nuggets.'

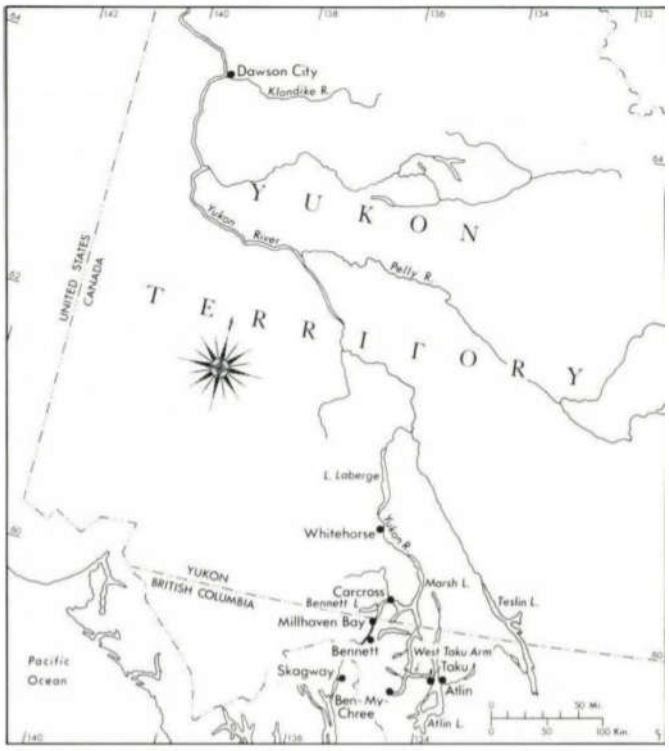
The Partridges stayed at Millhaven for more than 11

years as the search for gold waned and the stampeders trickled past them on their way south. Kate set out a trapline and started keeping chickens. The men took what meat and fish they could gather from the land. In 1903, Kate's diaries show a series of entries about gardening efforts. On 10 May, there were 'ten boxes of salad sown'. On 23 May, garden work was begun and on 26 May, radishes were transplanted to the garden. By the end of June they had planted potatoes, beans, beets, squash and cabbages.

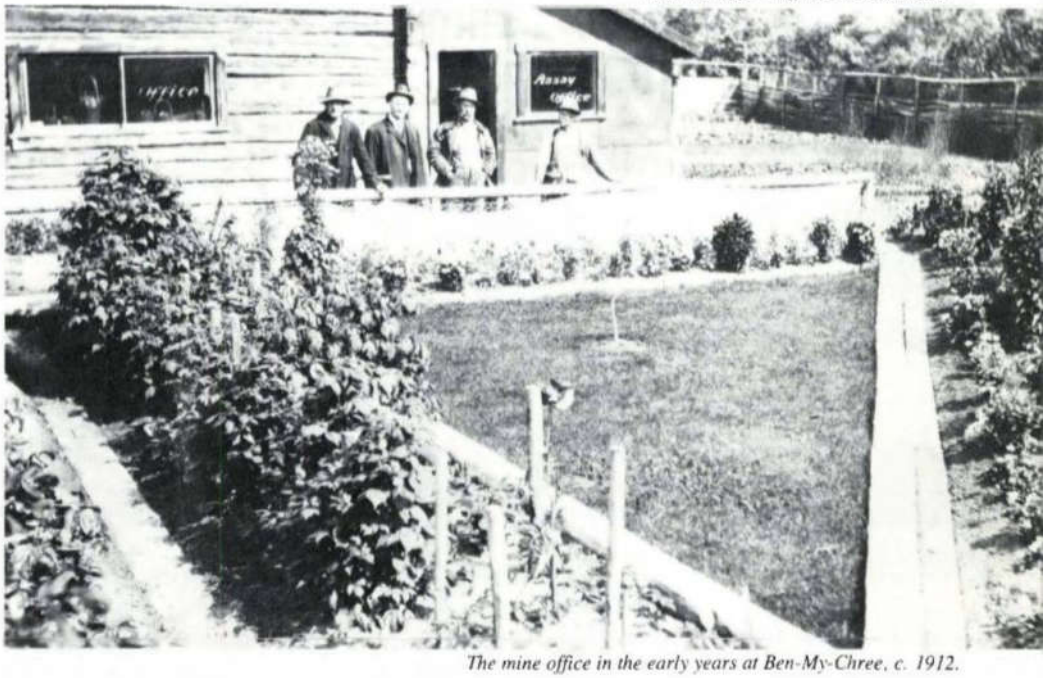
Horticulture proved to be the Partridges' most successful venture. This aging couple created an English country garden in the northern wilderness that tourists would travel thousands of miles to see in the 1920s.

At Millhaven Bay, Kate watched the garden expand. With the help of a faithful companion, Ludwig Swanson, and a number of hired hands, a second garden was dug in 1904 and flowers were added to the seed orders. The Partridges grew watercress successfully and added peas, celery, herbs and mint to the vegetable garden.

Although their only communication with neighbours was by boat or trail, they had occasional visitors, including the well-known Anglican mis-



Yukon Archives — Reginald Brooks Collection



The mine office in the early years at Ben-My-Chree, c. 1912.

Yukon Archives, McBride Museum Collection

View of the estate at Ben-My-Chree.

sionary the Right Reverend William C. Bompas, Bishop of Selkirk, who retired to Carcross in 1901. By 1906, a former missionary, Miss E.M. Dalton, had come to stay with the Partridges as Kate's steady female companion.

Otto Partridge was more than 50 years old by 1910 but he still possessed a gambler's heart and spent summers sailing the southern lakes in a small launch looking for a lucky strike. In 1911, he thought he'd found one on West Taku Arm in the Atlin, B.C. mining district, so he and Kate left their home at Millhaven and set up a new camp, with a mining crew, at the southernmost inlet on West Taku Arm.

That summer and fall the crew began to build a home for the Partridges while they constructed a bunkhouse and mess hall for themselves. Stanley McLellan and his wife Annie worked as foreman and cook for the hard-rock mine. And, although the mess hall was half a mile up the mountain behind the Partridges' house, Annie became a new friend for Kate. The two women kept up what appears to have been a daily correspondence, sending notes and packages up and down the tramway from the mine site to the office.

A few of Annie's letters have been preserved and they provide a glimpse of a woman's life in a mining camp. In one letter she tells Mrs Partridge:

> Stanley says will you please send up a lantern, the night shift will need it to come home. He and Paddy are putting canvas on that exposed side of the house and I think it is going to be a big improvement. My writing looks rather funny but I cut my front finger and have it tied up, making it rather stiff. It isn't serious at all, but I hate blood all over the place. Have the white oil cloth on the dining table and the piece of colored that was on it on the other table. Now I can put up some pictures etc. to make it look more like home; one of the boys said the other day it was getting to look more like home all the time.

After only three months the friendship was cut off abruptly when a snowslide swept through the mess hall, killing both McLellans. One account said they were peeling potatoes and, when their bodies were dug from the snow, one was holding a potato and the other a knife. The McLellans were taken to Atlin for a funeral service and burial and most of the mining crew was laid off for the winter.

Otto rebuilt the mess hall and continued operations for several more years. But more snowlides discouraged him and, again, their gardening efforts were more successful than the business, so eventually the Partridges retired into the greenhouse and garden. The Ben-My-Chree estate grew to include well-cropped lawns, boardwalks and flowerbeds as well as stables and a trellised walkway to a wishing well.

The sternwheelers were the Partridges' link with the outside world, bringing mail, supplies, livestock and feed. The bi-weekly appearance of the *Gleaner* was an important event in their early years, noted faithfully in Kate's diary. On 29 and 30 September 1913 she

> staid awake for 'Gleaner'...heard her whistle at 2 a.m. very dense fog...at 2.10 a.m. went down to meet Gleaner and set out a lantern — no sound or sign — came home...waited until 5 a.m. saw her slip in quietly at 6 a.m. grounded. She pulled out about 7:15 having left horsefeed — very nice day — took pictures of icicles at wharf — only one hour's sleep.

Taking photographs was one of several hobbies Kate nurtured in her isolation. She marked picture-taking expeditions in her diary and listed prints she planned to send to friends and family for Christmas.

Kate also wrote long letters to friends and appears to have read avidly. Otto was often away for days at a time, leaving her to do household chores and while away hours in the garden. Some of her entries suggest she was restless, waiting alone for a visitor or for Otto's return. On 13 May 1913 she wrote 'Otto home from Atlin 3 p.m. 77 hours away.'

Christmas at Ben-My-Chree was a combination of the old country and the new. In November 1912 Kate made 24 pounds of mincemeat and boiled seven puddings in preparation for the December feast. When the day came, there was a tree suspended over 18 presents

and six grouse and four ptarmigan for the meal.

Occasionally Kate would venture out with her husband on a winter excursion. In mid-January 1913 she made Dundee cake and roasted 20 pounds of beef for a Robbie Burns celebration in Atlin. They dined and danced for three days in the nearby town before returning to the silence of a snow-bound Ben-My-Chree.

The gardens occupied much of Kate and Otto's time from late March — when they sowed flowers in pails or boxes in the greenhouses — to late August when they harvested the root crops. The gardens were not purely decorative; they provided much of the foodstuffs for the groups of workers who lived with them on West Taku Arm. Kate kept a record of the eggs the chickens laid, along with notes about the first rhubarb showing and the first fruits from the strawberry beds. In early June 1919 she recorded seven rows of onions planted and 32 stalks of asparagus cut. The same week potatoes and cabbages were planted and the flower beds turned. By late July they were eating their first new potatoes and much of the later harvest was stored in a root cellar through the winter, with carrots sometimes lasting until the next spring.

But it was the flowers that lured tourists off the sternwheeler *Gleaner* when she stopped to deliver mail. Delphiniums grew ten feet tall and pansies five inches across. The Partridges grew dozens of varieties of flowers under the long hours of summer sun. Asters, nasturtiums, tulips, gladiolas, sweet peas and peonies all bloomed within the three and a half months when the earth was freed of frost.

In 1917, the British Yukon Navigation Company arranged two special excursions to Ben-My-Chree in their new sternwheeler, the S.S. *Tutshi*, built especially to handle the growing tourist trade between Skagway and Atlin. There were more excursions every year with growing demands and by 1925 the superintendent of White Pass Railway's river division remarked that West Taku Arm was the most popular destination for tourists. The next year the *Tutshi* alternated daily trips to Ben-My-Chree and to Taku, the connecting terminal for Atlin.

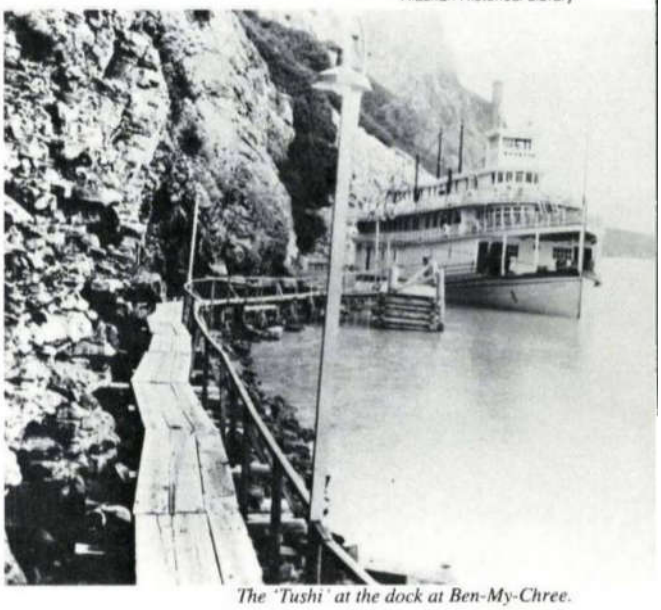
Tourists flocked to see the flowers growing in a northern mountain valley. Between late June and early September, the sound of the *Tutshi*'s whistle at Ben-My-Chree meant 40 to 100 visitors would soon be filing up the boardwalks for an evening visit with the Partridges. The British Yukon Navigation Company supplied a Japanese servant for the season to help Kate serve tea and cakes or homemade rhubarb wine. Otto entertained the guests with stories of the gold-rush days. And before the end of the visit, Kate would go over to the harmonium to lead a singsong.

The tourists usually slept on the boat as it made its way back to Carcross to meet an afternoon train. But

Yukon Archives — Reginald Brooks Collection

Otto Partridge entertaining excursionists.

Alaskan Historical Library



The 'Tushi' at the dock at Ben-My-Chree.

Yukon Archives, MacBride Museum Collection

Kate and Otto Partridge in the garden.

some evenings, if the crowd was lively, the *Tutshi*'s captain would stop the boat at the neighbouring community of Engineer Mine and the miners would put together a band to play for a dance.

Tourists often wrote to the Partridges thanking them for their hospitality and singing praises of Ben-My-Chree. Sometimes they would send seeds for a new variety of flower or a book to help pass the winter hours.

The Partridges kept their own record of visitors through guestbooks. For several years, either Otto or Kate wrote short descriptions of some of the tourists in the margins beside their names — perhaps to jog their memories when they received a letter months later. 'Large, dark emotional' described one woman in the 1923 season. 'Red straw sailor, sang' was the entry for another.

Otto died before the tourist season of 1930 at the age of 75. Kate greeted visitors alone for the season, then followed her husband in January 1931. The Partridges' long-time associate Ludwig Swanson carried on the tradition of Ben-My-Chree hospitality and White Pass hired some extra hands to help with the gardens. The excursion to Ben-My-Chree remained popular until the *Tutshi* was taken off the southern lakes in 1955, outmoded by recently completed all-weather roads.

The windows of the Partridges' buildings were darkened with boards and the flower beds left untended for the first time in 45 years, waiting for the wilderness to reclaim the clearing in the mountain's shadow.

Almost 30 years later, infrequent visitors still find their way to Ben-My-Chree by motorboat or plane. Drawn by the romance of the Partridges' story, they make their way along the same glassy reflections of peaks and forest as did wealthy American excursionists of the 1920s and 1930s.

The gardens are overgrown now and the ornamental spruce beside the front door towers over the roof and creaks against the wall in the wind. In high summer, the greenhouses are lined with flats of yellowed weeds and dried earth. Cobwebs lace the stable doors.

But a new owner has cut back the alders that had hidden the boardwalks and wishing well. Delphiniums, poppies and cornflowers push their way up through the weeds and are joined by northern wild flowers — fireweed, columbine and the smaller arctic variety of poppies. Hummingbirds find their way back each year to the valley's blooms.

In the late August afternoon travellers still find some of the magic that kept Kate and Otto in the North. And standing among the waning purple blossoms of fireweed, it is not difficult to evoke the girl of Otto Partridge's heart, dressed in velvet and lace, greeting visitors at the garden gate. ◆

The Exotic Flowers of Churchill

By Linda Fairfield

A water-colourist and designer, Linda Fairfield has devoted eight years to portraying the wild flowers of Manitoba. Her drawings of northern varieties are to be published in a guide book on the wild flowers of Churchill and the Hudson Bay Lowlands. The book, now in preparation by Dr Karen Johnson, botanist with the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, will also include photographs by Robert Taylor.

Funds for preparation of the book have been provided by the Canada Council and the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

Generally, one thinks of the area around Churchill as a bleak, flat country, not quite the Barrens and certainly not the wooded scenery of the Canadian Shield. One hears descriptions of stunted trees, the branches of which grow on only one side of the trunk, great grey boulders along the shore of Hudson Bay and clouds of mosquitoes. These visions are, in fact, correct. But the actual atmosphere or ambiance of the area is impossible to describe in words or capture in photographs. To be in Churchill is to be introduced to the feeling of the North with its lowering skies and limitless horizons. One's visual acuity and perception of distance are constantly deceived by the lack of a reference point and time is not the same as that which determines our days in the South.

Churchill is located in a unique environment. Here the waters of Hudson Bay bring the arctic ecosystem farther south than at any other point in Canada. This meeting of the northern limit of the great Boreal Forest, southern limit of the Arctic and marine influence of Hudson Bay, creates an unusually varied environment in a relatively small area.

Among the magnificent forms of the Greywacke rocks that make up the shore of the Bay, still rebounding after the retreat of the Ice-age glacier, are miniature heaths. Here can be found Arctic and Alpine plants of the Heath family (Ericaceae) which include — of all things in Manitoba — a Rhododendron *(Rhododendron lapponicum* Wahlenb)! Other habitats include salt and fresh water tidal flats along the Churchill River, the beaches of Hudson Bay, wet and dry tundra and Boreal Forest. Each provides its own places for plants to live.

Butterwort — Bladderwort Family
Pinguicula vulgaris L. — (Lentibulariaceae)

Undaunted by the northern limits of its habitat, this insectivorous plant is very common in the area, growing on moist gravel beds and peat. The leaves, a basel rosette, appear in mid-June and soon produce one or two flowers which suggest those of a violet in colour and form. 'Vulgaris' (common) is the larger of the two species found in the area. The smaller, less common Butterwort is 'Pinguicula villosa'.

Small insects are attracted to the leaves which secrete a sticky substance. The trapped insects are digested by enzymes in the leaves, and provide the plant with part of its nitrogen supply.

The long, brilliantly lit summer days are responsible for a rapid growth cycle in all plants. The scale of plants and flowers is small compared to related species in the South but one adjusts to their diminutive size like a shrinking Alice.

In a few short weeks, seeds and fruit ripen and ridge and tundra are covered with a blanket of startlingly red leaves. The sun sinks to the horizon. The arctic wind howls down the frozen Bay, blasting snow and ice crystals over all, and shaving the branches from the north side of trees. The land is white as far as the eye can see, waiting for spring.

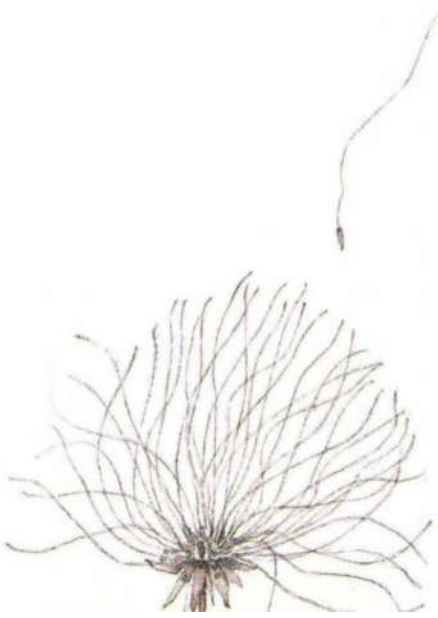
Flame-coloured Lousewort — Snapdragon Family
Pedicularis flammea L. — (Scrophulariaceae)

Of the several plants in the Snapdragon family which grow in the area, this is one of the most attractive. The upright little stalk of about four inches bears a spike of fascinating flowers which look like miniature parrot bills. They bloom from the middle to the end of June. True to the name 'flammea', the colour is indeed flame-like and though the plant is not abundant, it is immediately noticeable because of the brilliant flowers.

White Mountain Aven, Arctic Aven — Rose Family
Dryas integrifolia M. Vahl — (Rosaceae)

Shortly after the Rhododendron has disappeared from the landscape, the Aven appears to take its place. The large white flowers appear en masse from dense mats of shiny oval leaves. The blossoms, held aloft on very slender stalks, vibrate in the breeze from the Bay creating a dazzling spectacle.

The number of petals in the flower head varies from approximately five to twenty.



Northern Lady's Slipper,
Sparrow's Egg Lady's Slipper
Cypripedium passerinum R.

Orchid Family
(Orchidaceae)

This orchid has a Northern Boreal distribution from Alaska to James Bay with a disjunct station on the north shore of Lake Superior. The Northern Lady's Slipper is one of the largest flowering plants in the Churchill area. The flowers appear in early to mid-July and are as exotic as all orchids — even more so in this harsh environment.

Round-leaved Orchid Orchid Family
Orchis rotundifolia Banks (Orchidaceae)

The Round-leaved Orchid is relatively abundant in the Churchill area. It appears at the beginning of July on mossy hummocks near the willows that grow at the transition of Boreal Forest to Tundra. The flowers are very dainty and, like many northern flowers, are pollinated by mosquitoes.

Churchill
July 5, 1981

Bottlenose Whaling in the Arctic

Part II: The Norwegians

By Randall R. Reeves

'They come from every point of the compass towards the struck one in the most mysterious manner.'

SEALING AT JAN MAYEN had attracted ships from many northern European nations since as early as the late eighteenth century, but by the 1880s this activity had become almost exclusively the province of Norwegians from the Oslofjord ports. These shrewd seafaring men kept a close eye on developments in the emergent Scottish bottlenose whale fishery. In 1882, the year after David Gray's revelation concerning the industrial value of bottlenose oil, Norwegian sealers took a few of the whales themselves. In 1885, 19 Norwegian vessels captured close to 900 bottlenoses, nearly twice as many as were taken in the peak year of the Scottish fishery (535 in 1883).

Once the idea of bottlenose whaling took hold among the Norwegian merchants, there was no doubt about who would dominate the fishery. Thomas Southwell, a British naturalist whose annual reports on the arctic fisheries constitute a valuable contemporary perspective, conceded: 'They [the Norwegians] sail at very small cost, and of course our expensively equipped vessels, with better-fed and paid crews, cannot compete with them in this industry.' The Scottish whalers complained that the Norwegians quickly glutted the market for bottlenose oil, driving the price per ton down from a high of £90 in 1882 to £26 in 1888. In 1891 more than 80 Norwegian vessels participated in the Greenland and Norwegian Seas fishery, landing about 3,300 bottlenose whales.

The Norwegian fleet consisted almost entirely of small schooners and sloops. Though most of them lacked auxiliary steam, they were specially equipped to take advantage of bottlenose-whale behaviour. Rather than relying on a team of whaleboats to stalk and capture the whales, the ships themselves generally had two guns mounted on the rail at the bow and two more at the stern, sometimes with a fifth on the jib-boom end. A couple of small boats, each with its own mounted cannon, could be deployed when circumstances warranted, but most kills were made directly from the ship.

Not only did the whalers rely on the whales to approach the ship ('seeking' behaviour according to terminology used by Canadian government biologist Edward Mitchell), but they counted on another curious habit. As Axel Ohlin, a Swedish zoologist, described it:

> When a member of a 'shoal' is harpooned his fellows do not abandon him; even when he is killed and in his agony leaps out of the water, they run round him, ...which gives a good occasion of capturing another. In this way four or five of the same herd may be killed. His faithful friends desert him first when dead and brought to the ship.

David Gray claimed that his *Eclipse* crew often managed to kill an entire pod 'before the hold of them was lost'. Catches of ten were not unusual; his largest catch from a single group was fifteen. 'They come from every point of the compass towards the struck one in the most mysterious manner.'

Gray claimed as early as 1883 that the whales had already begun to abandon this epimeletic or 'care giving' behaviour, becoming suspicious and difficult to approach. Nevertheless, the Norwegian catches remained high through the 1890s, totalling well over 23,000 whales during that decade. In fact, it was not until 1911 that the annual catch fell below 1,000.

Marine biologist Randall Reeves is with the Arctic Biological Station, Ste-Anne de Bellevue, P.Q. His particular interest is the history of whaling.
Photographs, unless otherwise credited, are by Don C. Foote, courtesy of A.W. Mansfield.

A whale catcher in Vestfjorden, Norway, August 1964.

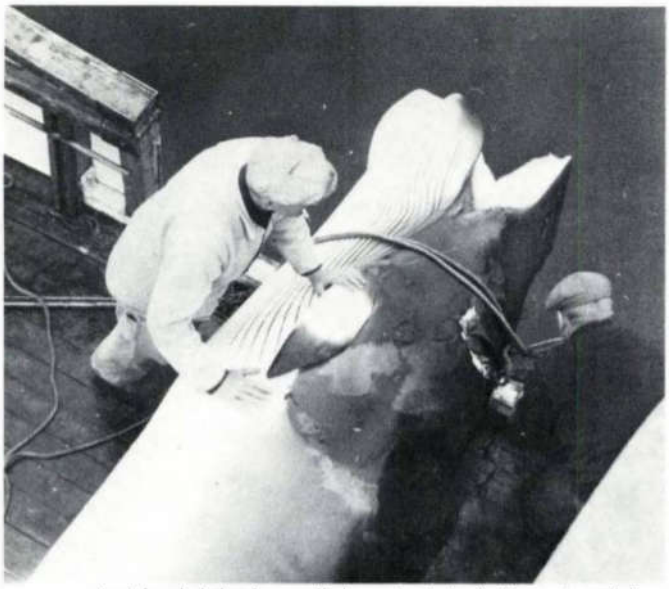
The subsequent decline in landings almost certainly was a consequence of overexploitation. Like other whales, the bottlenose is slow to mature and reproduce. Females do not become fertile until the age of 8-12 years, after which they maintain a two-or three-year reproductive cycle, bearing a single calf at a time. Many investigators liken the social structure of the bottlenose whale to that of the sperm whale. In both species, males are appreciably larger than females. In addition, the adult male bottlenose has a peculiar modification to the frontal bones of the skull, giving its forehead a flattened appearance in head-on view. Old 'flatheads', as the whalers called them, generally either keep to themselves — alone or in small groups — or associate individually with groups of young males, females and calves. Like sperm whales, then, they may be organized socially in such a way that dominant (alpha) bulls inseminate numerous females in a given breeding season, a system called polygyny. If whalers hunted selectively for large whales, then they may have eliminated a disproportionate number of alpha males and thereby affected the population's productivity and fitness.

By the early 1920s, the first phase of Norwegian bottlenose whaling was moribund. As the great polar explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, admitted in 1925, 'of late this form of whaling greatly declined owing to the comparative scarcity of whales.' For a number of years, bottlenose whales were left alone in parts of their North Atlantic range. If, as seems likely, the aggregate population consists of several regional stocks, then some of these probably had a chance to recover as the fishery ground to a halt. The enterprising Norwegians, however, were developing a new whaling venture, and the bottlenose's reprieve was not to last long.

The minke or little piked whale had been hunted along the Norwegian coast from very early times, using strong nets and poisoned arrows. When rifles became readily available late in the nineteenth century, the traditional methods were discarded in favour of simply shooting these small whales. Eventually, modern whaling techniques, similar to those used in the Norwegian basking-shark and bottlenose-whale fisheries, were directed at minke whales. In fact, as the bottlenose fishery declined during the 1920s, more fishing and whaling vessels were converted to minke whalers.

There are important differences between the minke, a baleen whale, and the bottlenose, a toothed whale. The minke has come to be prized in Norway for its flesh, which is marketed in the form of steaks, stew meats, sausages, meat cakes and luncheon meats. The late Don Foote, a Canadian who studied the small-whale industry in Norway during the early 1960s, found that whale meat was selling in Oslo for about half the price of beef, despite the fact that a minke whale steak 'compares well in texture and taste with good cow beef'.

The bottlenose, on the other hand, offers little other than its oil, which is not edible. Meat from toothed whales can be used in Norway only as animal food, although there is no intrinsic problem with eating the meat of many toothed whales. For example, sperm-whale meat is eaten in Japan, pilot-whale meat in the Faeroes, and white-whale meat in the Arctic. Nansen apparently tasted bottlenose meat and found it 'quite palatable, like the flesh of other species of whales'. He did, however, attest to the 'strongly aperient' quality of the oil. The natives of West Greenland call the bottlenose whale *anarnaq*, which means 'the one with laxative effect'. A Danish doctor living in West



A minke whale has been pulled onto the deck of a Norwegian whaling vessel in the North Atlantic, 1964. Note the white baleen in its open mouth and the distinctive white patch on the flipper.

Meat, the most valuable product obtained from minke whales, is inspected by the district veterinarian; the packer (right) looks on. Svolvaer, Norway. August 1964.

Greenland related to Nansen the story of his visiting a native settlement at which no one greeted him in the usual manner at the beach. Upon investigation, he found the entire population confined to their houses. 'A dead [anarnaq] had been washed ashore the previous day, and they had all overeaten themselves on it.'

The social organization of the minke whale is different from that of the bottlenose whale. In areas where food is concentrated, up to a dozen minke whales may be found in close proximity to one another. They do not demonstrate, however, the strong social bonds typical of bottlenose whales. They are solitary and show none of the group allegiance that would allow an entire pod to be killed one by one. Minke whales are best hunted individually. Little advantage is gained by having harpoon cannons mounted at various sites on the catcher vessel. Most minke whaling vessels have a single cannon at the bow; some have another at the stern. Even though minkes, like bottlenoses, sometimes approach a stationary vessel out of what can only be interpreted as curiosity, the hunt usually involves a chase. In fact, minkes are elusive. They can be erratic swimmers in flight, changing directions abruptly and remaining submerged for irregular intervals.

The minke fishery spread during the 1930s from the Møre coast of west-central Norway, northward to the Lofoten Islands and Troms county. Vestfjorden became an important centre of whaling activity. Although the number of vessels involved decreased during the early war years, an average of 281 boats took part in the Norwegian minke fishery between 1941 and 1949. While the minke was clearly the whale of choice, making up well over 90 per cent of the catch, some bottlenose whales as well as a few killer whales and pilot whales were caught. The percentage of bottlenose whales in the catch gradually increased until 1965, when 695 were taken, representing over 21 per cent of the entire small-whale catch.

The toothed-whale portion of the catch in this postwar fishery served two markets: the British pet-food industry and the Norwegian fur industry. Fortunately for the bottlenose, killer, and pilot whales, both of these markets dried up early in the 1970s. Under pressure from animal protection and conservation groups, pet-food importers in England agreed voluntarily to stop using whale products in 1972, and the British government officially banned such imports in 1973. During the late 1960s the Norwegian fur ranchers greatly decreased their stock of ranch mink while at the same time greatly increasing their stock of blue fox. Their overall demand for feed dropped, and the cost of whale meat rose considerably compared to other feeds like slaughterhouse remains, blood, and fish scraps. It no longer made economic sense for the

whalers to bother catching and processing bottlenose whales and other toothed whales. Since 1971, the Norwegian small-whale catch has consisted almost entirely of minke whales.

What effect did a century of exploitation have on the stocks of bottlenose whales? This question has been debated in the meeting rooms of the International Whaling Commission, but there is still disagreement. Edward Mitchell, Canada's representative on the Commission's Scientific Committee, has argued that some stocks were probably seriously overtaxed. As evidence, he points to the westward expansion of the small-whale fishery and the decreasing trends in the catch in certain areas over certain periods of time. A Norwegian scientist admitted in 1974 that after a few years of intensive whaling north and east of Iceland and around Jan Mayen during the early 1960s, 'the bottlenose was scarcely to be seen in these areas, and the vessels had to move into the Labrador Sea to catch this species.'

Canadian whalers based in Blandford, Nova Scotia, caught 87 bottlenose whales between 1962 and 1967, nearly all of them in the Gully, a submarine canyon northeast of Sable Island, and along the edge of the Grand Bank. This brief episode of Canadian bottlenose whaling ended as the Blandford station turned its full attention to the hunt for large baleen whales, mainly sei and fin. The modern Norwegian small-whale hunting fleet moved into West Greenland and Canadian waters in 1968. Bottlenose whales were included in the catch for only three years, 1969-1971, when 818 were taken off the coast of Labrador. The economic demise of bottlenose whaling probably came in time to forestall serious overexploitation of the western North Atlantic population.

The same cannot be said of stocks east of Greenland. Of course, in the absence of any census data, it is impossible to make unequivocal statements about the status of an animal population. However, the dramatic decline in catch during the early 1900s, for which no purely economic cause is apparent, is good indirect evidence of stock depletion. And even though their numbers may have been thinned considerably by the 1920s, bottlenose whales in the Norwegian and Greenland Seas continued to be hunted opportunistically by the Norwegian multispecies small-whale fishery. In Mitchell's words:

> Since the vessels could make profitable voyages by taking other species [mainly minkes but also killer and pilot whales], they could field the technology to hunt remnants of [bottlenose] pods and sparsely distributed populations. In this respect the situation resembled the later Blue Whale Unit system in the Antarctic, allowing tradeoffs between species to maintain catch at high levels.

Ivar Christensen

A large male northern bottlenose whale, about 9 metres long, taken by a Norwegian whaling vessel in June 1971, off Labrador.

Norwegian scientists have tried to marshal a case against Mitchell's view. They claim that the westward expansion of the fishery was caused as much by the availability of larger vessels as by any change in the density of whales. In their opinion, much of Mitchell's evidence can be interpreted as little more than a reflection of changing economic conditions in Norway.

Regardless of any uncertainty that remains concerning their status, bottlenose whales are now protected by international agreement. The Red Data Book of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists them as 'vulnerable'. They are designated a 'protection stock' by the International Whaling Commission, which means that member nations are forbidden to hunt them. It is unlikely, given the present climate of protectiveness toward whales and the increasing expense of maintaining a distant-water whaling fleet, that the hunt for bottlenose whales will resume in the foreseeable future. It is to be hoped that enough bottlenose whales survived when whaling ended to ensure full repopulation of all parts of their range. ◆

RIEL AND THE REBELLION
1885 Reconsidered

By Thomas Flanagan. Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon, 1983. 177 pp., illus. $19.95 cloth; $12.95 paper.

Reviewed by J.E. Rea

Whether he so intended or not, Thomas Flanagan, in his second major study of Louis Riel, has given us the government's view of the events of 1885 in the Saskatchewan valleys. It is the result, he claims, of his more mature judgement, moulded by years of study of the sources and by articles he has written on some matters here considered. The sources, it turns out, represent primarily the federal government's side of the story and Flanagan's revisionist interpretation is thus too narrowly based and too restricted in context. But it is courageous and, to a degree, timely.

Specifically, Professor Flanagan claims that the Métis were partly responsible for their grievances and that the federal government was on the point of resolving them, thus rendering the rebellion unnecessary and unjustified. As to Riel himself, he received a fair trial and a just verdict. The current suggestion that Riel should be granted a pardon next year on the centennial of the rebellion is, in his view, wrong-headed. This catalogue of assertions is almost breathtaking in its implications.

One could quarrel in many cases with the detail of Flanagan's arguments, but the distinctions would be very fine. By and large, his comments on the land question, Riel's attempt to seek personal gain (or compensation, as he would have it) and the immediate background of the rebellion are sensible and usually even-handed. It is in the connecting up of events, of establishing causal relationships in proper context, that serious questions arise.

Grievances from the North-West, including specific Métis complaints, were not unfamiliar in Ottawa. They had been met with perfunctory promises of redress for years prior to the rebellion. Given the treatment the Métis of Manitoba had experienced in land matters, was there any reason why the Métis of the North-West should be satisfied with yet another Ottawa promise? Flanagan may very well be right, but credibility was not Ottawa's strong suit in this area.

Similarly, the circumstances of Riel's trial are hardly at issue any longer among historians. He was guilty of treason. The important question, however, is why only Riel was so charged, while the other rebels, Métis and Indian, were arraigned on the lesser charge of treason-felony. Can one rightly assume that Riel's role was so overwhelmingly dominant? Was Gabriel Dumont less guilty than Riel?

Furthermore, why did Ottawa feel it necessary to distort completely the medical report of Doctor Valade? And finally, if the rebellion was as little justified as Flanagan argues, why are the Métis still awaiting settlement of their land claims? On the other hand, Flanagan is surely correct when he rejects the proposal for a ceremonial pardon for Riel. It would be an empty gesture and a violation of history.

While contentious, this is an important book that deserves to be widely read. It makes very clear that the final verdict on the events of 1885 is not in and will remain a provocative and valuable contribution to the debate.

Dr Rea is a professor of history at the University of Manitoba.

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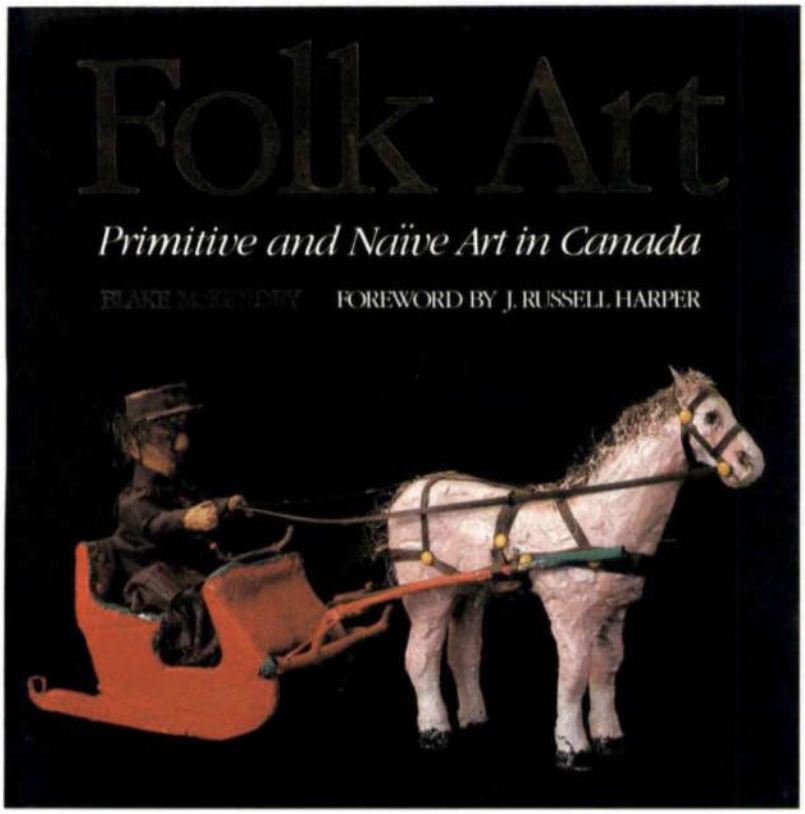
FOLK ART
Primitive and Naïve Art in Canada

By Blake McKendry. Methuen Publications, Toronto, 1983. 287 pp., illus. $39.95.

Reviewed by Philip Shackleton

Unlike the critic who knows everything about art but can't decide just what he likes, Blake McKendry is not uncertain in the exercising of his own taste, the while demonstrating a familiarity with the lexicon and the debating



capacity of the arts analyst. *Folk Art: Primitive and Naïve Art in Canada* is a welcome addition to the uncrowded shelf of literature in that field in which the collectors and curators together could have met in one National Gallery elevator cage — until very recent years. It offers a workmanlike examination of one area of the arts, fine or otherwise, and serves as a guide to organize folk art into a blessedly few categories, ignoring as unworthy the efforts of those who would subdivide the subject to death or would insist that certain works be exhibited only in ethnological museums or in cabinets of curiosa and ephemera.

His four pigeon-holes are Primitive, Naïve, Provincial, and Folk-Culture Artifacts and he demonstrates that each of 270 works illustrated fits neatly into one or another of them.

With illustrations from Picasso and Gauguin, he examines the strong influence of some aspects of the folk tradition upon modern art, and he underscores just how close is the link between the contemporary folk artist and those anonymous painters whose prehistoric beast images live yet on hidden cave walls. At the same time he distinguishes between the two and cites the wide dissemination of images by modern technological means as a virtually unavoidable influence upon the untutored artist of the present day. In his summary he reveals anew the limitations of the scientific method as a tool of study in the arts world. The artist may have sympathy with selection and some degree of order; the scientist can abide only thorough classification as he strives towards the expressed generalization.

I am thankful that his text is not a soaring hymn of praise but rather a solid prose examination of the subject. His illustrations, with a very minimum of duplication from other works, provide the images whose graphic language is more evocative and more ancient than any contrived through a conventional alphabet. They include art work some thousands of years in age, as well as that majority of pieces selected from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The great vitality that pervades so much of this work, unrestrained by certain schooled techniques and conventions, is apparent too in McKendry's effective use of quoted passages in which present-day artists provide piquant oral background to their work.

A 400-name checklist, as the author suggests, is intended as a foundation for a Canadian catalogue bound to grow with today's increasing interest in art without artifice. And the six-page bibliography, a wonderfully comprehensive reference, will keep the most demanding of students in the library stacks for months.

Russell Harper, who died just as this book was published, contributed the foreword, an endorsement from the author of the first work on Canadian 'vernacular' art and the curator responsible for the first gallery exhibition of Canadian folk art. Veteran critic himself, Harper rejoices in the 'unconscious art' which he points out is 'oblivious to changing fashions', and he commends McKendry's treatment of 'the truths and the joys inherent in the business of living'.

Philip Shackelton is author of 'The Furniture of Old Ontario' and co-author, with Ken Roberts, of the recently published volume 'The Canoe'.

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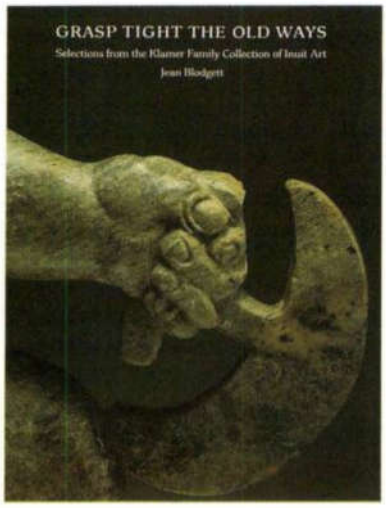
GRASP TIGHT THE OLD WAYS
Selections from the Klamer Family Collection of Inuit Art

By Jean Blodgett. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1983. 271 pp., illus. $20.00 paper.

Reviewed by Kay Kritzwiser



On the cover of the book *Grasp Tight the Old Ways*, the strong, square-nailed fist clutches an ulu, a crescent-shaped knife customarily used by an Inuit woman for domestic duties such as scraping hides. The photo is a detail from the back-cover reproduction of a sculpture in green stone by Aqjangajuk Shaa, a 46-year-old Inuit carver from Cape Dorset. It is a secure, aggressive figure, not identifiably male or female.

The title and the sculpture give an unusually apt symbolism to the book written by Jean Blodgett, an independent Ottawa curator and authority on Inuit art. The book was published by the Art Gallery of Ontario to accompany its Klamer Family Collection of Inuit Art on its travels in Canada and the United States from 1983 to 1985.

Jean Blodgett discovered incised syllabics in the course of preparing another sculpture for the Klamer exhibition. Mariano Aupilarjuk, a Repulse Bay carver born in 1923, had carved his plea in Inuktitut text between two ivory figures. Translated as 'Grasp tight the old ways', it was a reminder to preserve his culture which existed long before the white man came to the Arctic.

The title emphasizes an awareness of a culture rooted in the centuries. But the contents of the book, from the formidable hand on the cover to the extensive documentation and interpretation of the work of some 82 artists collected in 14 countries, make a dawning realization of an indisputable fact. Their works are works of *art*. On this basis, the artworks come into their own.

When Blodgett made her choices from the Klamer collection, that fact had been apparent to the Klamers for some 20 years. Winnipeg-born Harry Klamer and his wife Marcia, born in Midland, Ontario, were helplessly destined to become Inuit collectors, judging by the candid essay Mr Klamer has contributed to the book. Once they had built their home in Toronto for themselves and their two children, they were addicted. As they collected, they discovered their treasures in Canada, but more often, they found themselves buying in Amsterdam, in Tel Aviv, in Santa Fe, in Bogota. They knew the objects they were buying, from Paris to Frobisher Bay, were unquestionably works of art.

In 1978 when the Klamers gave a portion of their collection — some 700 pieces — to the Art Gallery of Ontario, a two-year tour was planned. When Blodgett as guest curator made her selection, the thesis of her book was secure. The work of the Inuit artist stands now as fine art, known and collected and measured internationally by collectors all over the world.

Even so, Blodgett's assignment to produce the accompanying catalogue was formidable. 'While other art historians who are writing about well-known Western artists would have trouble narrowing down their information, I have had trouble finding even the merest details about some of the artists included here,' she writes. 'Aside from the problem of sheer numbers — hundreds of Inuit have made carvings, maybe only one piece in a lifetime — there is a dearth of published information on the individual artists and their work.'

Apart from a lack of documentation, Blodgett faced another deterrent. 'While artists everywhere may be unable to verbalize about their work, Inuit artists may simply not wish to discuss certain subjects such as shamanism,' she wrote.

Nevertheless, in *Grasp Tight the Old Ways*, Jean Blodgett has added immeasurably to slowly accumulating resource information and opinion. It is distinguished by the simplicity and directness of her approach.

Kay Kritzwiser is a Toronto art critic.

REBELS, RASCALS & ROYALTY
The Colourful North of LACO Hunt

By LACO Hunt; edited by Barbara Hunt. Outcrop Ltd., Yellowknife, 1983 219 pp., illus. $18.95.

Reviewed by Shirlee Smith

This book by LACO Hunt is about equally divided between his time with the Hudson's Bay Company and with the federal government — although he only worked for the Company for ten years, 1928 - 1938. It is written in the introduction that the author finished his 'recollections of a long and varied career in Canada's North' shortly before his death in 1978. Therefore, one will never know what editorial changes he would have agreed to had he lived. The book in its present form is mostly an anecdotal roll-call of historic and modern northerners and, as such, it is successful.

Mr Hunt writes convincingly about his various Hudson's Bay Company postings. At Fort Chipewyan in Alberta, in 1931, one quickly realizes that the fur trade at that post had changed little in over 100 years. George Simpson complained in 1820

that 'sitting within 4 feet of a large fire the Ink actually freezes in my pen'; the author notes that 'The big pot-bellied stove in the centre of the store consumed firewood in vast quantities, and the ink with which I wrote my accounts always had to be thawed.' It is interesting to read that pemmican was used on the trail in 1931, and that Fort Chipewyan had a stockade until 1933.

The book has a large cast of characters, particularly those from the Mackenzie River area where Mr Hunt was stationed both as a fur trader and a government administrator. Here one meets the well-known fur traders J.J. Loutit, Colin Fraser, Pierre Mercredi; the entrepreneurs Jim Cornwall, Pat and Mickey Ryan; the great heroes in northern aviation from 'Wop' May to Max Ward, and the missionaries and mounties. The many outstanding visitors also have their places, including governors-general and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Some Canadians born after 1950 may not know that the federal government was not always visible in the Northwest Territories. After almost a century of neglect it was evident by 1955 that the government was becoming interested in the North. Changes in administration, education, transport and medical facilities would dramatically alter the lives of the inhabitants. Northern Service Officers appeared in native communities. Known to 'real' northerners as the 'whiz kids', they were often strong on theory but weak in practical contributions. The government take-over of mission schools created the greatest controversy, with one strong-minded priest saying, in public schools 'you teach that two oranges and two oranges make four oranges, whereas in our school we teach from the very first grade that two Hail Marys and two Hail Marys make four Hail Marys.' It is apparent that the author's patience was tested, but he writes about the Ottawa bureaucracy in a fair and candid manner.

Of course, there are passages where Mr Hunt is open to criticism. His 'flashbacks' to the nineteenth century while he discusses such personalities as George Simpson and Emile Petitot are distracting to the reader. One

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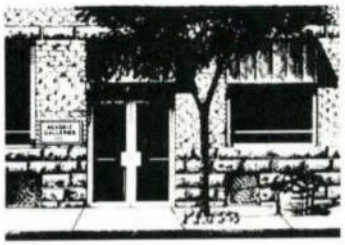

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wishes that he had remained within his own career and given his opinions of many of the distinguished visitors he met. On one page he mentions playing host to Mr Justice William O. Douglas of the United States Supreme Court; W.J. Keswick, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company; and Lord and Lady Waverley. What impressions did he form of these internationally known people? The reader is not told. They are dismissed with one line each. Three or four minor historical inaccuracies were detected, including the one that the famous 4-Point HBC blankets were made in Scotland, whereas they were made in England. Surely the statement 'that people regularly go berserk in remote Northern communities' is also questionable.

LACO Hunt had a ring-side seat at many of the drastic changes which were taking place in the Northwest Territories in the 1950s and 1960s; as a northerner he helped ease the transition. What is also important is that his readable book, *Rebels, Rascals & Royalty*, will help those of us who live outside the territories to understand and appreciate the aspirations of the Dene and Inuit peoples.

Shirlee Smith is Keeper, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

UNCLE MIKE'S EDENBRIDGE
Memoirs of a Jewish Pioneer Farmer

By Michael Usiskin; translated by Marcia Usiskin Basman. Peguis Publishers, Winnipeg, 1983. 174 pp., illus. $9.95 paper.

Reviewed by Abraham Arnold

Mike Usiskin was an atypical man and an atypical Jew. A bachelor who spent over three decades as a homestead farmer in northern Saskatchewan, he was a man who believed in the socialist ideal and he expressed this in his folk memoirs.

He stirred the imagination of diverse Canadian writers — John Murray Gibbon, Gabrielle Roy and Miriam Waddington — with the result that he had entered the annals of Canadian literature before his book, *Oksen un Motoren*, was published in the original Yiddish. Nowhere, however, is the memory and legacy of 'Uncle Mike' more greatly cherished than in the bosom of his family of nieces and nephews of two generations spread across Canada.

Marcia Usiskin Basman clearly undertook to translate her uncle's book as a labour of love and she has succeeded in bringing his essentially humanist legacy to a wider audience.

'Uncle Mike' begins his story in London, England, where he and his brother settled in 1906 after migrating from Tsarist Russia.

Born in a village in Vitebsk Province, they fled from persecution, as did tens of thousands of Jews. In London they worked as cutters in a fur factory where they quickly became disillusioned with the sweatshop conditions and the exploitation.

Imbued with revolutionary spirit, Mike Usiskin inveighs against the terrible conditions of the working class and the valuing of a human life as less than the smallest part of a machine.

This is a prelude to the account of the dream that began to inspire Usiskin and some of his friends to settle on the land in a co-operative farm project. They actually attempted to start a poultry farm not far from London but encounters with philanthropists and the establishment bureaucracy contributed to the failure of their efforts.

Then they heard about Edenbridge where a number of Jews had begun to settle as homesteaders in 1906. Their enthusiasm was rekindled by the invitation to join Jews who were already farming in Saskatchewan.

As translated by Marcia Basman, 'Uncle Mike's' memoir of pioneer life is presented in 21 chapters. He recounts his impressions of the wilderness in which he found himself on arriving at 'Star City', the no-city railway stop closest to Edenbridge, some 20 miles away through the bush. He relates the dangers of

his first walk to the post office, and his difficult apprenticeship at felling trees, with no tools except a less than first-class axe. He tells of the hospitality of farm neighbours, of how they started a travelling library and worked to develop other social and cultural amenities. And he describes the one-room log-cabin 'palaces' in which the farmers lived.

Marcia Usiskin Basman has done her best to avoid a literal translation in her English rendering of Uncle Mike's Yiddish text yet she has remained largely faithful to the original. The objective in translation is to use appropriate equivalents but this does not always exclude a literal version. From this point of view the translation is inconsistent. There are many smooth-flowing passages, as in a section near the end of the book where the achievement claims of the different groups in the colony are outlined for a visitor.

> The people from the south, the Afrikaners, felt they were the most prestigious residents. After all, they had been the first settlers in Edenbridge. They were the first to buy forty acres of land from the government on which they built the synagogue and the cemetery. They also had plans for a communal bath and a *Mikvah* (a ritual bath)....
>
> And we, from the northern section of the settlement, had only three established families to our credit. We were the Londoners, and that was all we could claim for ourselves in the realm of prestige. We had to accept the fact. It was true, though, that we had hopes of building a hall which would be used as a theatre; we had plans for a library, and we were eager to find a modern teacher for our children; we had plans for a co-operative store and other such 'sinful' aspirations. But so far all these were still plans. Not too much prestige in that.

Basman's translation also has bumpy passages, however, where the language does not ring true. For example, in the midst of a paragraph describing Uncle Mike's arrival at Star City, the translation reads:

> My other companions decided to get off at the previous stop *in hope to finding some employment.*

What Uncle Mike actually said of his departed friends is: 'They were looking for work.' The sentence in translation could have concluded with the words 'to look for work'.

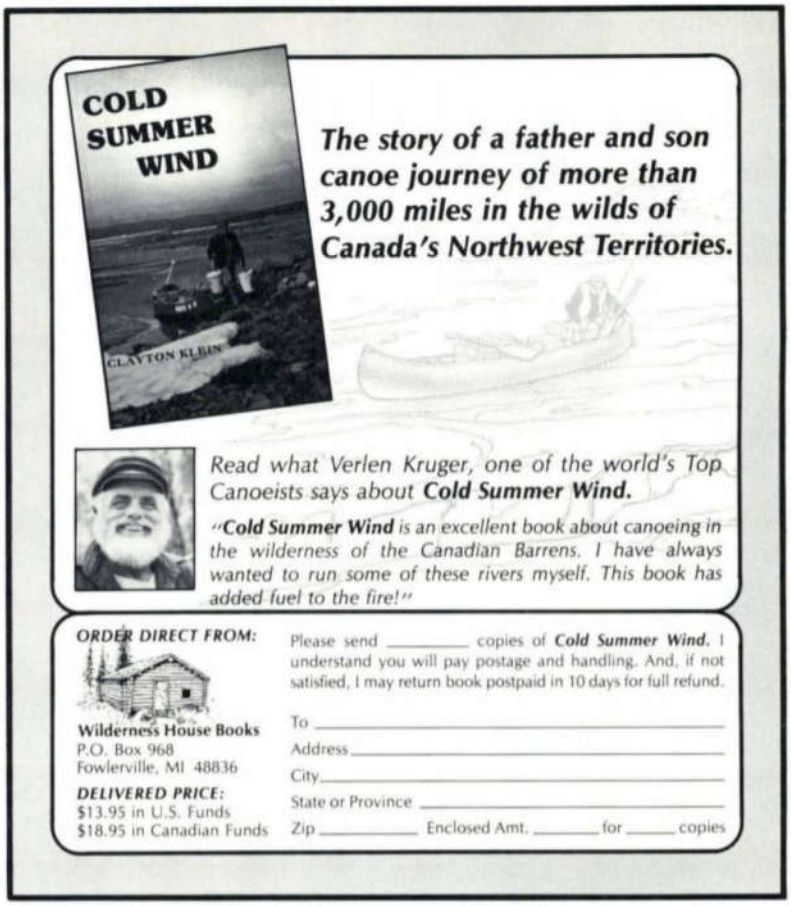
On the next page, within one sentence, she moves from an appropriate non-literal equivalent into a literal trap, as follows:

> My first view of the man was a pair of big feet hanging out of *overalls so dirty that it would make a riddle to answer what their original colour might have been.*

Surely she would have been more faithful to Uncle Mike's view of the overalls with an appropriate equivalent for 'riddle' e.g. 'overalls so dirty that I was completely mystified as to what their colour might have been when they were new.'

In her introduction Marcia Basman takes note of Gabrielle Roy's interview with Uncle Mike, published in her book: *Fragiles lumières de la terre*. Roy recalled his 'miserable' threshold in the midst of the forest and how solitary he was. Yet she felt that 'this poor colonist had achieved a level of happiness that thousands like him had searched for since God knows how long.'

When John Murray Gibbon published his book *Canadian Mosaic* on the history of European immigrant groups in Canada (McClelland and Stewart, 1938) he quoted a Jewish Colonization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Association letter from a farmer in Edenbridge which, it was disclosed years later, had been written by Mike Usiskin (translated from the Yiddish by Louis Rosenberg). A small excerpt from that letter indicates why Gibbon said it 'reads almost like a Psalm of David':

> How beautiful are the fields afterwards when they become green. This draws you and draws you and makes you willing to root out forests, turn over fields, even drink the sweat that pours from your forehead and yet be satisfied.

More recently Miriam Waddington presented two papers on his work at learned conferences in the summer of 1980. In the second of these papers, for a forum on western Canadian literature at Strawberry Creek, Alberta, she explained Usiskin's book as a memoir, as distinct from an autobiography, and described him as:

> the picaresque hero of his modest narrative (who) weaves back and forth in time, tells part of the story in one chapter and elaborates it a few chapters later.

Waddington also said:

> Usiskin is no poet but he does have a personal and dramatic way of creating scenes that remain with the reader long after the book is closed.

Mike Usiskin's memorable memoir, now available in English, should long remain in the mind of the reader.

Mr Arnold is co-author with William Kurelek of 'Jewish Life in Canada'.

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For the convenience of readers in remote areas, the addresses of publishers whose books are reviewed in this issue follow:

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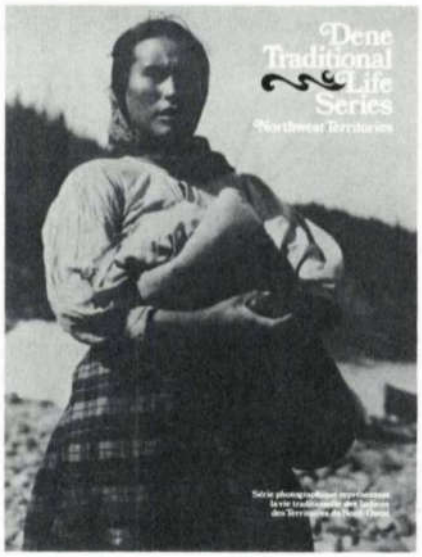

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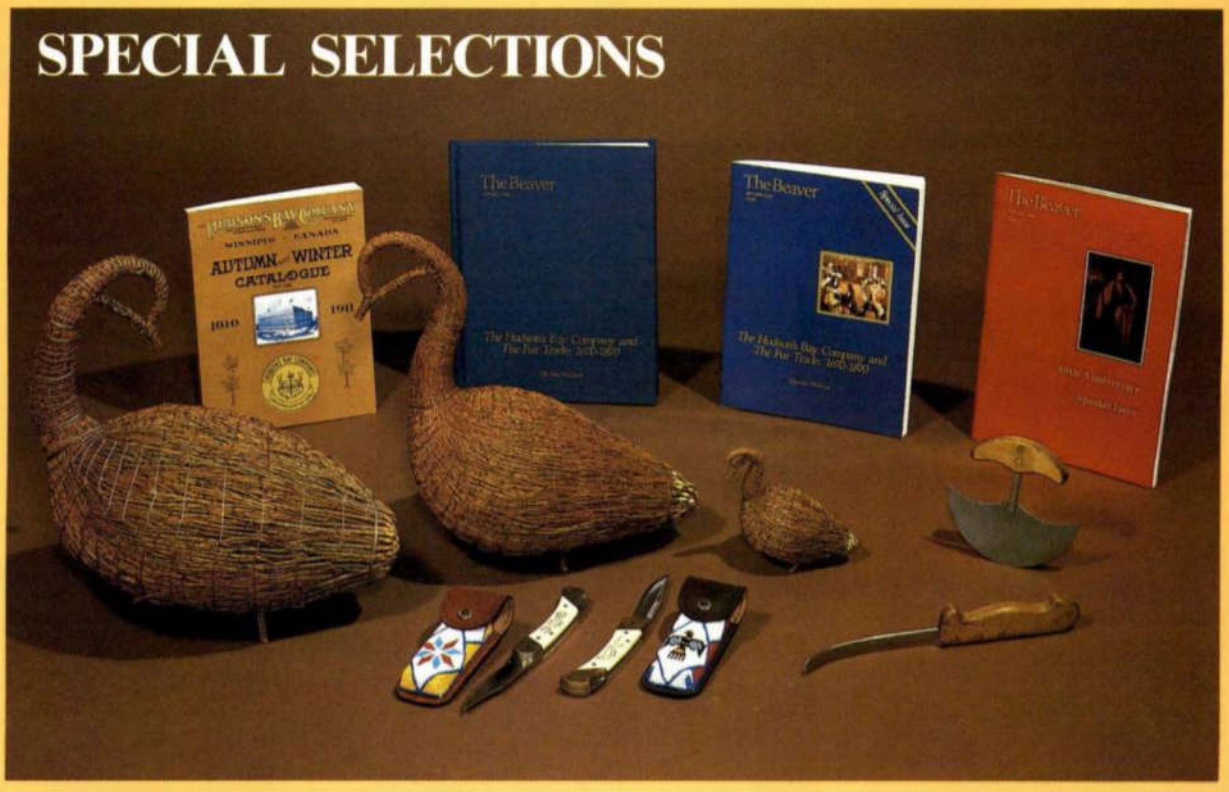

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